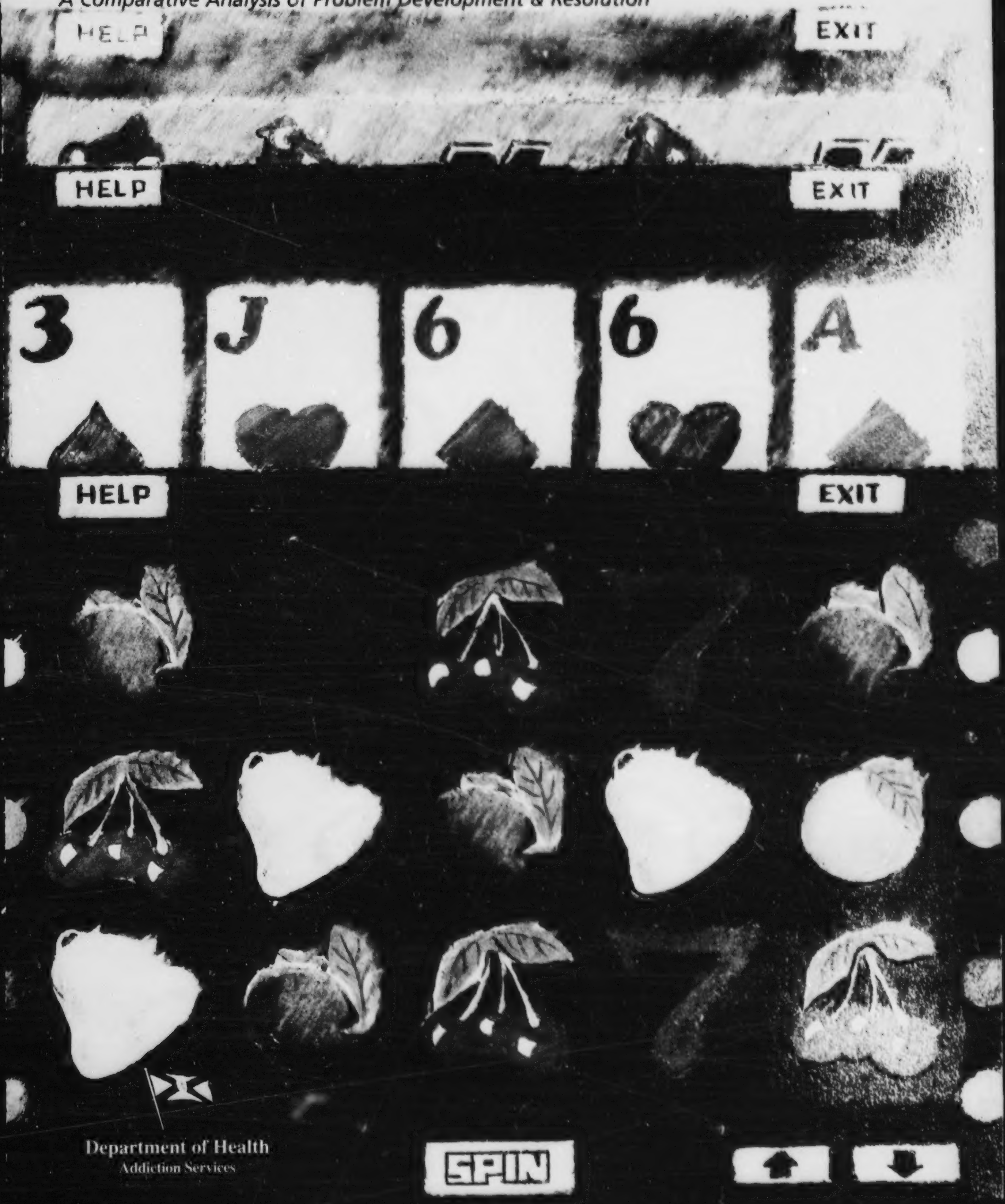
RESEARCH REPORT

2000 Regular VL Players Follow up

A Comparative Analysis of Problem Development & Resolution



HELP
EXIT
HELP
EXIT
3
J
6
6
A
HELP
EXIT
7
SPIN

Department of Health
Addiction Services

RESEARCH REPORT

102-05742

2000 Regular VL Players Follow up

A Comparative Analysis of Problem Development & Resolution

Principal Investigators:
T. Schrans
T. Schellinck
G. Walsh

Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, 2001

This report was prepared by the Nova Scotia Department of Health, Addiction Services and published through Communications Nova Scotia.

The Nova Scotia Department of Health wishes to acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Mark Dickerson and his colleagues at the University of Western Sydney, Australia, for their review of this document.

For further information concerning the 2000 Regular VL Players Follow-up Survey, please contact:

Brian Wilbur,

Director, Addiction Services
Integrated Primary and Population Health Branch
Nova Scotia Department of Health
PO Box 488
Halifax, NS
Canada B3J 2R8

Telephone: (902) 424-7220
E-mail: wilburb@gov.ns.ca

The principal investigators can be contacted at the following address:

Dr. Tony Schellinck
Ms. Tracy Schrans
Mr. Gordon Walsh

Focal Research Consultants Ltd.
7071 Bayers Road
Suite 326, Starlite Gallery
Halifax, NS
Canada B3J 2C2

Telephone: (902) 454-8856
E-mail: focal@focalresearch.com

ISBN 0-88871-665-6

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 INTRODUCTION
4 Study Goals
5 Study Objectives
5 Phase One - 1997/98 NS Regular VL Players' Survey

6 DEVELOPMENT PHASE

7 METHODOLOGY & QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

12 ANALYSIS

16 STUDY OVERVIEW

19 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES - NON-PROBLEM VERSUS PROBLEM PLAYERS (PAST AND PRESENT)

21 PROFILE OF VLT PLAY BEHAVIOURS
21 Early VL Play Behaviour
21 Introduction To Play
21 Motivations For First Trying VLT's
24 Circumstances Under Which Introduction Occurred
27 Winning Versus Losing During The First Play Session
27 Development Of Regular Play Patterns
28 Reasons For Playing VLT's More Regularly
32 Experiencing A Big Win Early
33 Changes In Early Play Behaviour
33 Play With Family and Friends
33 Changes In VL Play Frequency, Duration and Expenditure
34 Spending Limits Or Budgets
36 The Onset Of Video Lottery Problems
36 Suddenness Of Problem Onset
37 Situational Factors Associated With The Onset of Video Lottery Problems
39 Play Behaviour At The Time Video Lottery Problems Began
40 Time And Money Expenditure On Video Lottery
41 Problem Recognition
42 Admission Of A Problem

43 STOPPING OR REDUCING VLT PLAY
45 Frequency Of Stopping Or Reducing VLT Play
46 Mitigating Factors For Stopping Or Play Reduction By Problem Player Segment
46 Mitigating Factors - Resolved Present Players
49 Mitigating Factors - Resolved Past Players
51 Mitigating Factors - Unresolved Players
55 Stopping Behaviour & Outcomes
56 Positive Changes From Stopping/Reducing VL Play
59 Negative Changes Resulting From Stopping/Reducing Play Of VLT's
60 "Missed" Aspect Of Reduced Or Stopped VLT Play
62 Motivations For Play
62 Perceived Benefits Of Play
64 Perceived Negative Effects Of Play

66 FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF PLAY
66 Debt Accumulation/Repayment
68 Sources For VLT Funds

70 ROLE OF OTHERS (FRIENDS & FAMILY)
70 Pressure To Continue/Resume Play
71 Support To Stop/Reduce VL Play
72 Spousal Support
73 Support Of Friends
74 Recognition Of Problem Play By Others (Friends & Family)
75 Awareness Of Others' Involvement In Problem VL Play
76 Exposure To Household VL Play

77 USE OF FORMAL & INFORMAL SERVICES FOR ASSISTANCE AND/OR INFORMATION
78 Use Of Informal Support/Assistance
78 Use Of Spouse Or Partner
78 Use Of Other Family Members
79 Use Of Friends
79 Use Of Other VL Players
79 Use Of Church/Religious Leader
79 Use Of Family Physician
79 Reasons Informal Sources Were Considered Helpful
82 Reasons Informal Sources Were Not Considered Helpful
85 Use Of Formal Services/Programs Available To Help Problem Gamblers In Nova Scotia
86 Gamblers' Anonymous
88 Problem Gambling Help Line
89 Drug Dependency/Addiction Services
91 Reasons For Not Accessing Any Formal Services/Programs For Help

96 BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

The Nova Scotia Regular VL Players Follow-up Study represents the second phase of a two part random survey of video lottery players designed and conducted by Focal Research Consultants Ltd. for the Nova Scotia Department of Health (DOH). Phase One: The 1997/98 Nova Scotia Regular VL Players' Survey, was the first large-scale, random survey examining video lottery within the context of all adults in the population. The objective of the first phase of the research was to **"develop an extensive and comprehensive profile of video lottery players in the province of Nova Scotia in terms of play behaviours, attitudes, lifestyles and demographic characteristics."**

Between October 1997 and January 1998, all adults residing in 9,339 randomly selected households in Nova Scotia were screened for general involvement in various gambling activities, including video lottery. There were 18,650 adults successfully screened, of which 927 adults were playing video lottery at least once a month or more on an on-going continuous basis (Regular Video Lottery Players) and 261 had stopped playing the machines on a regular basis (Lapsed Regular Video Lottery Players). In total, 711 Regular Video Lottery Players participated in the first phase survey, of which 482 agreed to join a confidential panel for future VL research. Of the Lapsed Regular Video Lottery Players contacted, 192 consented to be recontacted for participation in the second phase of the research.

While the 1997/98 Nova Scotia Video Lottery Players' Survey made an important contribution in developing video lottery (VL) player profiles and identifying the risk factors associated with problem VL play, a gap remains in our understanding of the process from VL play introduction to problem development, as well as the use and relative effectiveness of various strategies in stopping or reducing play. It is believed that the Lapsed Regular VL Players and Problem VL Players who agreed to participate in follow-up research represent a unique group of players from which to study the factors contributing to successful cessation or reduction in VL play. **The purpose of the Phase Two NS Regular VL Players Follow-up Study is to compare the play behaviours, attitudes, lifestyles, characteristics, coping strategies and outcomes for Problem and Non-Problem VL Players who were able to stop or reduce regular video lottery play with those for whom VL gambling continues to be a problem.**

STUDY GOALS

- To identify the factors contributing to the development and resolution of problems with video lottery gambling;
- To provide accurate information that can be used in designing prevention and treatment strategies for problem video lottery players.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the Follow-up Study are to:

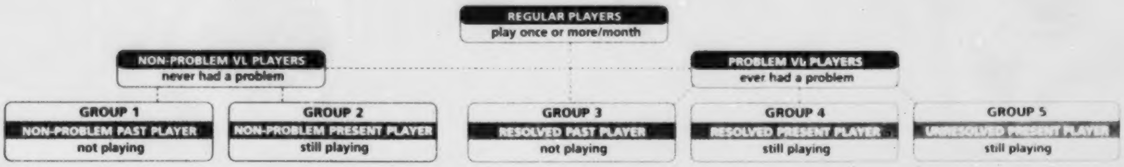
- Profile the demographic characteristics contributing to problem VL development and resolution;
- Examine early play behaviours and the role of significant life events, circumstances or "triggers" that are associated with the development of problem or non-problem VL play;
- Describe factors and "triggers" influencing problem onset, recognition, admission and resolution;
- Describe the perceived benefits and consequences of VL play, the process of quitting or reducing play, and the perceived benefits and consequences of not playing video lottery;
- Examine the financial consequences of VL play and the implications of borrowing money for VL and debt accumulation;
- Examine the role that family and friends play in either helping the problem player to reduce/quit VL play or enabling problem VL play;
- Describe the use and perceived effectiveness of informal and formal support services and identify opportunities and barriers for service and support improvement.

PHASE ONE - 1997/98 NS REGULAR VL PLAYERS' SURVEY

The 1997/98 Nova Scotia Regular VL Players' Survey provided extensive information as to the behaviours, attitudes, and characteristics of VL players, thereby making a significant contribution to the understanding of video lottery gambling. In addition, the study profiled VL gambling within the context of all adults in the province, thus, establishing benchmark measures against which VL play in Nova Scotia could be subsequently monitored and tracked. Furthermore, a random panel of players was compiled for which baseline measures are available for longitudinal study and comparison.

During the original study, 9,339 households and 18,650 adults in Nova Scotia were randomly sampled with a response rate of 80%. There were 927 adults identified as Regular VL Players, of which 711 completed in-depth interviews for an overall response rate of 61.3% for the Regular VL Players' Survey.

Based on the results of the Phase One Study, approximately 6% (5.7%; ±.33%) of Nova Scotians were characterized as being involved in regular, on-going monthly play of VLT's, with approximately 1% of adults (.92%; ±.14%) identified as current Problem VL Gamblers. Regular Players in Nova Scotia represent only 25% of all those who played VLT's in the last year, yet collectively contributed 96% of the provincial annual revenues derived from VL play. Moreover, the 1% of adults engaged in problem VL gambling alone account for approximately half (53%) of annual VLT revenues in Nova Scotia.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

In addition to current regular play, approximately 4.5% (±.29%) of adults indicated they had been involved in regular VL Play at some time in the past and, at the time of the original study approximately two years ago, they had stopped or reduced their regular playing patterns. Approximately one-third of these respondents (1.4% of adults; ±.20%) specifically noted they had reduced or stopped playing in response to concerns or problems with video lottery gambling.

When all past and present involvement in VL gambling is considered, it can be estimated that approximately 10.2% of adults in Nova Scotia have been involved in regular play of VLT's, with approximately one in five of these individuals (2.3%) identified as having experienced some level of problem or difficulty with their VL gambling.

REGULAR VL PLAYERS (1997/98)

	% of Nova Scotian Adults		Total
	Present	**Past**	**(n=18,650)**
Non-Problem Players	4.8%	3.1%	7.9%
Problem Players	0.9%	1.4%	2.3%
Total	5.7%	4.5%	10.2%

At the time of the Phase One Study (Oct. '97 - Jan. '98), it was estimated that approximately 40% of all Non-Problem Regular VL Players and 60% of all Problem VL Players had stopped playing the machines on a regular basis.

Thus, an opportunity existed to revisit these individuals to assess current play status (2 years later) and to identify those factors contributing to resolution, relapse or other changes in behaviour.

DEVELOPMENT PHASE

There has been little research conducted or information available specifically examining the etiology of problem gambling and/or the recovery process outside clinical or treatment populations. While interest in this important field of study is growing, there are few guidelines in place for conducting such research. Typically, Prevalence and Social Impact studies are the primary vehicles for assessing problem gambling within the general population. These approaches focus on estimating the number of individuals in a population meeting diagnostic criteria for the disorder. However, as Dr. Howard Schaffer and his colleagues noted in their Meta-Analysis of Prevalence Studies of Disordered Gambling in Canada and the United States;

> "*...there exists a proportion of the population who already have met their treatment need through natural recovery; self-help; or professional treatment. To date, no study has examined the extent of 'met need' among those who have experienced disordered gambling.*"
> (Schaffer, Hall, Vander Bilt; 1997; p. 113)

The primary impediment to such a study has been lack of access to research participants, in particular those who fall outside the population of gamblers in treatment. The Nova Scotia Department of Health, through Focal Research's Video Lottery Player Panel, has access to a random, representative sample of Nova Scotians who have stopped and/or reduced their video lottery gambling at some time in the past.

In addition to current regular play, approximately 4.5% (±.29%) of adults indicated they had been involved in regular VL Play at some time in the past and, at the time of the original study approximately two years ago, they had stopped or reduced their regular playing patterns. Approximately one-third of these respondents (1.4% of adults; ±.20%) specifically noted they had reduced or stopped playing in response to concerns or problems with video lottery gambling.

When all past and present involvement in VL gambling is considered, it can be estimated that approximately 10.2% of adults in Nova Scotia have been involved in regular play of VLT's, with approximately one in five of these individuals (2.3%) identified as having experienced some level of problem or difficulty with their VL gambling.

REGULAR VL PLAYERS (1997/98)

	% of Nova Scotian Adults		Total
	Present	**Past**	**(n=18,650)**
Non-Problem Players	4.8%	3.1%	7.9%
Problem Players	0.9%	1.4%	2.3%
Total	5.7%	4.5%	10.2%

At the time of the Phase One Study (Oct. '97 - Jan. '98), it was estimated that approximately 40% of all Non-Problem Regular VL Players and 60% of all Problem VL Players had stopped playing the machines on a regular basis.

Thus, an opportunity existed to revisit these individuals to assess current play status (2 years later) and to identify those factors contributing to resolution, relapse or other changes in behaviour.

DEVELOPMENT PHASE

There has been little research conducted or information available specifically examining the etiology of problem gambling and/or the recovery process outside clinical or treatment populations. While interest in this important field of study is growing, there are few guidelines in place for conducting such research. Typically, Prevalence and Social Impact studies are the primary vehicles for assessing problem gambling within the general population. These approaches focus on estimating the number of individuals in a population meeting diagnostic criteria for the disorder. However, as Dr. Howard Schaffer and his colleagues noted in their Meta-Analysis of Prevalence Studies of Disordered Gambling in Canada and the United States;

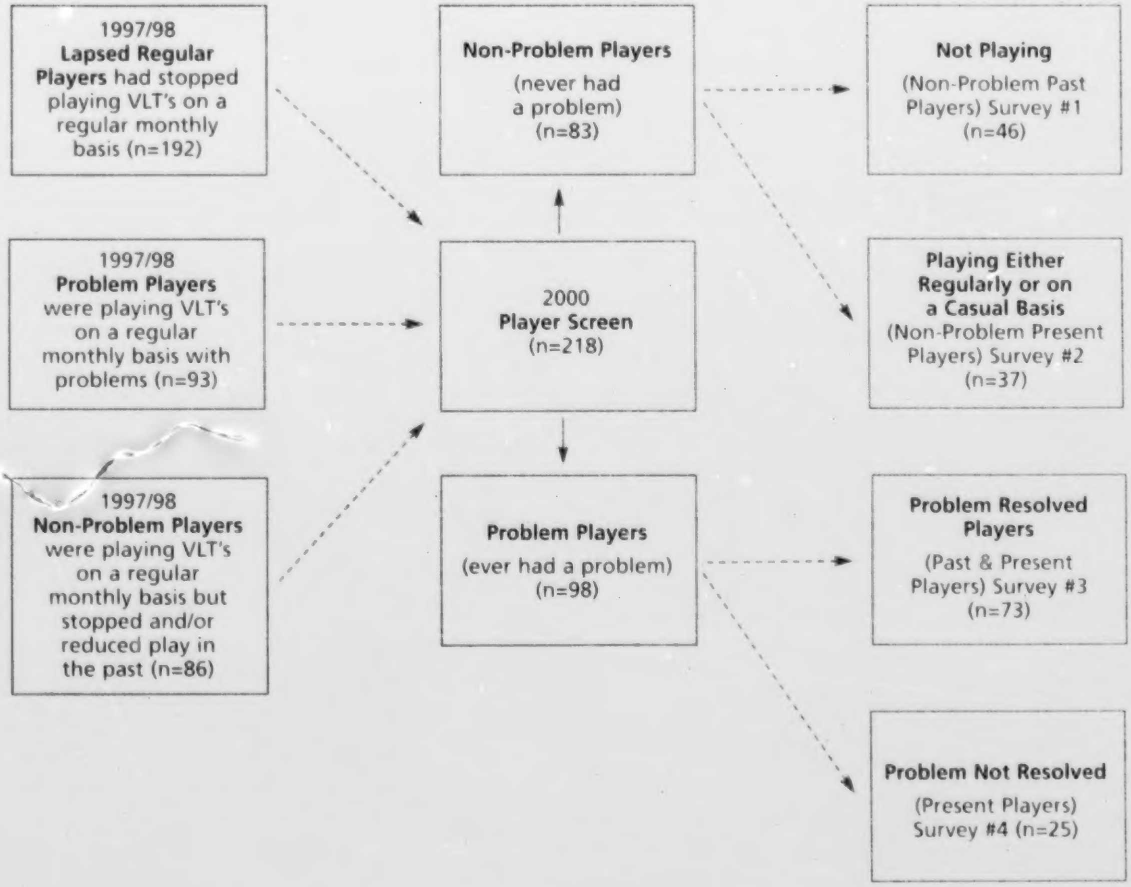
> *"...there exists a proportion of the population who already have met their treatment need through natural recovery; self-help; or professional treatment. To date, no study has examined the extent of 'met need' among those who have experienced disordered gambling."*
> (Schaffer, Hall, Vander Bilt; 1997; p. 113)

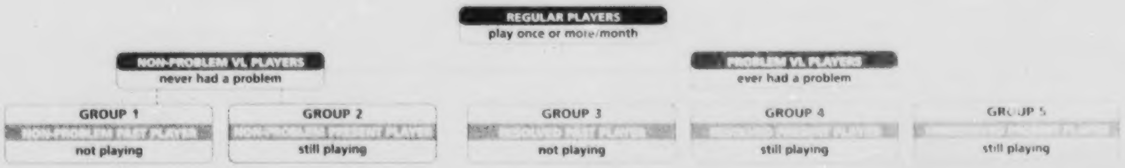
The primary impediment to such a study has been lack of access to research participants, in particular those who fall outside the population of gamblers in treatment. The Nova Scotia Department of Health, through Focal Research's Video Lottery Player Panel, has access to a random, representative sample of Nova Scotians who have stopped and/or reduced their video lottery gambling at some time in the past.

However, the paucity of well-defined studies examining the use and effectiveness of coping strategies by players in gaining and maintaining control over their gambling impacted development for the Nova Scotia Regular VL Players Follow-up Study. The Development Phase of the project was conducted from February 8, 1999 to February 15, 2000, prior to fielding the study. As was the case for the 1997/98 NS Regular VL Players' Survey, Focal Research Consultants partnered with the Nova Scotia Department of Health to enhance the quality and value of information obtained. (Refer to Technical Report for detailed summary of the Development Phase of the project.)

METHODOLOGY & QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

REGULAR VL PLAYERS FOLLOW-UP SURVEY MODEL


1997/98 Lapsed Regular Players had stopped playing VLT's on a regular monthly basis (n=192)
1997/98 Problem Players were playing VLT's on a regular monthly basis with problems (n=93)
1997/98 Non-Problem Players were playing VLT's on a regular monthly basis but stopped and/or reduced play in the past (n=86)
Non-Problem Players (never had a problem) (n=83)
2000 Player Screen (n=218)
Problem Players (ever had a problem) (n=98)
Not Playing (Non-Problem Past Players) Survey #1 (n=46)
Playing Either Regularly or on a Casual Basis (Non-Problem Present Players) Survey #2 (n=37)
Problem Resolved Players (Past & Present Players) Survey #3 (n=73)
Problem Not Resolved (Present Players) Survey #4 (n=25)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
still playing
GROUP 5
still playing

PLAYERS SCREEN

All respondents were initially screened in order to quickly identify the appropriate survey for the individual. The screening protocol was based on three measures:

1. **Current VL play behaviours** (over past 3 to 4 months)
- Present Players;
  play on a casual, irregular basis (less than once a month or more);
  play on a regular, continuous basis (1+ times a month);
- Past Players;
  Have stopped playing VLT's altogether.

2. **Self-reported involvement in problem VL gambling**
- Problem Players;
  have ever experienced problems with VL play, spending more time and/or money than they should.
- Non-Problem Players;
  have never experienced problems with VL play, never spending more time and/or money than they should.

3. **Self-reported resolution of problem VL gambling**
- completely resolved;
- partially resolved;
- unresolved.

Survey 1 - Non-Problem Past Players
Survey 2 - Non-Problem Present Players
Survey 3 - Problem Resolved Players (partially and completely)
Survey 4 - Problem Unresolved Players

In addition to self-reported involvement in problem VL gambling, the DSM IV and the measures for the triangulation method of Problem VL Player identification developed by Focal Research during Phase One were also included in the questionnaire.

These measures were used to verify the Problem/Non-Problem Player segmentation analysis undertaken in the current report.

PLAYER QUESTIONNAIRE

Four questionnaires were developed to address the information requirements of the defined player groups. The length of the questionnaires varied by player group to reflect the number of measures included in the instrument, ranging from Survey 1: Non-Problem Past Players = 118 questions to Survey 3: Resolved Past Players = 195 questions. In total, there were 112 questions common to each questionnaire, with 203 unique questions (175 close-ended; 28 open-ended). This yielded a total of 375 variables for the raw data collected by the surveys. The questionnaires were designed to address the information objectives of the study (see Appendix B - Technical Report).

Given the limited sampling frame of eligible respondents, a pretest was conducted by phone using referral based recruiting (n=12). Supervisory staff and project analysts participated in the pretest to ensure support personnel were familiar with procedures and survey instruments, and to incorporate senior feedback into final survey revisions. Upon commencement of data collection, the results of the first 30 completed surveys were used to assess sampling assumptions and questionnaire design. Respondents were recontacted to accommodate changes resulting from respondent feedback.

SENSITIVITY TRAINING

Interviewers at Focal Research must successfully complete a mandatory eighteen-hour training course for social and marketing research data collection. In addition, staff members are experienced in conducting gambling research and receive on-going training on procedures and protocols for conducting both qualitative and quantitative research. While it is emphasized that the interviewers are not trained counselors, it was also recognized that during the course of the study, they may potentially encounter individuals who are in crisis or distress. Staff needed to be adequately prepared, in order to cope emotionally and professionally with respondents without compromising the respondent's trust or the integrity of the data being gathered.

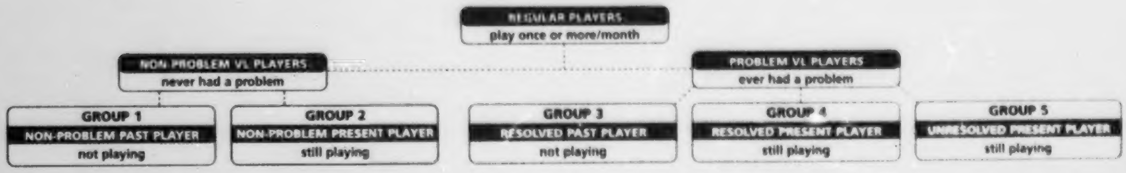
All project interviewers participated in a workshop and training session consisting of:

- sensitivity training provided by John LaRocque, Co-ordinator of NS Problem Gambling Services (NS DOH);
- data collection briefing, including sampling procedures, detailed review of screen and referral to appropriate survey (Surveys 1 through 4), probing and clarification for open-ended questions, role playing and discussion;
- familiarity with problem VL gambling referrals and supplementary services (1-800 Problem Gambling Help Line, Crisis Intervention Programs).

This supplementary training was undertaken to:

- enhance the information gathered by front-line interviewers;
- familiarize interviewers with materials, procedures and measures;
- provide an overview of gambling issues and problems;
- provide interviewers with greater sensitivity and understanding towards respondents;
- ensure appropriate coping mechanisms, if the interviewers encounter someone in crisis or distress.

The Problem Gambling Help Line was available for immediate referral throughout data collection for the project. All Problem Players participating in the study were specifically asked on the survey if taking part in the study had made them want to play the machines and, if so, did they wish to be referred to anyone to assist them in countering the urge to play. In total, two respondents were referred to the Help Line and were recontacted by a principal investigator as a follow-up to their participation in the study. Additional respondents were provided information on available services, but did not desire contact at the time of the survey.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

SAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS

The surveys were reviewed and approved by DOH. The inclusion of the new and extended measures had implications for both data collection and analysis. The most significant outstanding methodological consideration surrounded sample sizes for the four player groups.

By necessity, the questionnaires were customized to accommodate the different player groups. While the complex survey structure was required to ensure respondents were only asked questions relevant to their experience, there was concern that the available Lapsed Player sample (n=192) would not yield sufficient sample sizes within each player segment to allow for meaningful comparisons. Therefore, the Regular VL Player Panel, compiled during the 1997/98 NS Regular VL Players' Survey, was accessed to supplement sample sizes.

In the original study, it was found that approximately 25% to 33% of all regular VL players recycle in and out of regular play. In fact, it was estimated that approximately 25% of regular VL players are starting and/or stopping regular play in a given year. As a result, samples could be drawn from the Regular Player Panel to specifically augment data collection as required.

The two player panels (Regular VL Players Panel and Lapsed VL Players Panel) were compiled randomly from the same household screens and, thus, represent the same underlying population. Therefore, there is no methodological conflict in combining the two panels for use in the current design.

The Regular VL Player Panel was only accessed for those respondents identified in the 1997/98 NS VL Players Survey as:

- Problem VL Players (≈16% of Regular VL Players) (n=90);
- Non-Problem VL Players who report having stopped and/or reduced their regular play levels at some time in the past (≈26% of Non-Problem Regular VL Players) (n=86).

Sample Results:

CALL DISPOSITION REPORT

A. Total Sample (NIS/wrong #/deceased/unable to locate)	371 (109)	100% (29%)
B. Total Eligible Respondents **(no answer/unavailable)**	**262** **(44)**	**71%** **(12%)**
C. Total Contacted (refusals)	218 (24)	59% (6%)
D. Total Cooperative Contacts **(disqualified after screening-non-problem players only)**	**218** **(13)**	**59%** **(4%)**
E. Completed Interviews	181	49%

Response rate (D/B)= 74%
Refusal Rate (Refusals/C) = 11%
Drop-off Rate = 29%

SAMPLE CONSIDERATIONS

The surveys were reviewed and approved by DOH. The inclusion of the new and extended measures had implications for both data collection and analysis. The most significant outstanding methodological consideration surrounded sample sizes for the four player groups.

By necessity, the questionnaires were customized to accommodate the different player groups. While the complex survey structure was required to ensure respondents were only asked questions relevant to their experience, there was concern that the available Lapsed Player sample (n=192) would not yield sufficient sample sizes within each player segment to allow for meaningful comparisons. Therefore, the Regular VL Player Panel, compiled during the 1997/98 NS Regular VL Players' Survey, was accessed to supplement sample sizes.

In the original study, it was found that approximately 25% to 33% of all regular VL players recycle in and out of regular play. In fact, it was estimated that approximately 25% of regular VL players are starting and/or stopping regular play in a given year. As a result, samples could be drawn from the Regular Player Panel to specifically augment data collection as required.

The two player panels (Regular VL Players Panel and Lapsed VL Players Panel) were compiled randomly from the same household screens and, thus, represent the same underlying population. Therefore, there is no methodological conflict in combining the two panels for use in the current design.

The Regular VL Player Panel was only accessed for those respondents identified in the 1997/98 NS VL Players Survey as:

- Problem VL Players (≈16% of Regular VL Players) (n=90);
- Non-Problem VL Players who report having stopped and/or reduced their regular play levels at some time in the past (≈26% of Non-Problem Regular VL Players) (n=86).

Sample Results:

CALL DISPOSITION REPORT

A. Total Sample	371	100%
(NIS/wrong #/deceased/unable to locate)	(109)	(29%)
B. Total Eligible Respondents	**262**	**71%**
(no answer/unavailable)	**(44)**	**(12%)**
C. Total Contacted	218	59%
(refusals)	(24)	(6%)
D. Total Cooperative Contacts	**218**	**59%**
(disqualified after screening-non-problem players only)	**(13)**	**(4%)**
E. Completed Interviews	181	49%

Response rate (D/B)= 74%
Refusal Rate (Refusals/C) = 11%
Drop-off Rate = 29%

NOTE: Refer to Project Summary - Appendix D of the Technical Report for detailed project statistics by sample. In determining response rates, Focal Research does not drop any numbers from the sampling frame. Thus, total eligible numbers/respondents always includes all outstanding non-contacts (no answers, callbacks, answering machines), regardless of how many attempts are made to establish contact. Focal Research does not set a maximum callback limit. The sample is always managed to maximize response rates including, when necessary, recontacting of "uninformed" refusals by senior supervisory staff. Efforts were made to locate panel participants who had moved or changed numbers between the two measures, and the panel was up-dated.

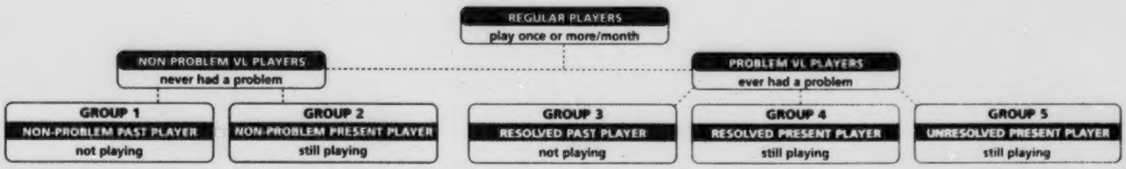
DATA COLLECTION

Supervised data collection was conducted from Focal Research's centralized facility in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from February 22 to April 6, 2000.

All surveys were 100% edited by supervisory staff concurrent with data collection. Any errors, omissions or required clarifications were referred to senior level interviews for immediate remedial action. Random quality control checks were conducted on 15% of each interviewer's completed surveys, whereby the supervisor recontacted respondents to confirm key measures, verify the interviewer's performance, and to ensure the individual was comfortable participating in the study. Respondents were provided with Focal Research's toll-free number. Further inquiries were followed up by Project Management at Focal Research and referred to appropriate organizations as required, including Addiction Services (NS Department of Health), the Problem Gambling Help Line, Professional Marketing Research Society and/or the Better Business Bureau.

Completed questionnaires were reviewed daily by senior research analysts to monitor the efficacy of the screening process, the survey instruments, as well as the information gathered. The sampling frame was also reviewed daily to monitor and maximize response rates, and to incorporate scheduled callbacks into daily call schedules. The surveys were conducted at the convenience of the respondent to ensure privacy and minimize distracting influences during the interview. This required the accommodation of interviews conducted outside of the normal hours and days of data collection. Respondents were also able to call in through a toll-free number between 8:30 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. to complete the survey. On average, each survey took approximately 46 minutes to administer, with a range of 23 to 76 minutes.

Coding and data entry for close-ended questions were undertaken concurrently with data collection to ensure updated summary data was available throughout the process. A 15% random quality control check was conducted on all coding assignments and data entry. The data was examined for out-of-range values and underwent cleaning and logic checks before being submitted for analysis.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES (QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS)

To gain additional insight as to the motivations and reasons underlying player behaviour, there was a substantive qualitative component to the data gathered. Collectively, there were 28 open-ended questions that varied among the four surveys to reflect different Problem/Non-Problem Player experiences.

Based upon results obtained in the Phase One research, and extensive pretesting during the development phase of the current study, partial pre-coding for specific questions was developed prior to data collection. However, for each open-ended question, the entire verbatim response was recorded by respondent ID and entered into an Excel worksheet for all respondents. Verbatim responses were reviewed daily and 100% edited for comprehension and clarity. A coding mastersheet for each question was developed upon completion of 33% of the sample (n=60). New codes were introduced as required.

Coding of the verbatim responses was performed by fully trained senior level staff using a triangulation methodology. Coding assignments for each verbatim were initially conducted independently by two separate coders. The coding assignments were then verified independently by two different research analysts. The results were compared and any discrepancies or disagreements in assignments among the coders were addressed by a principal investigator to ensure consistency. For many verbatim responses, more than one coding assignment was required. To preserve the contextual integrity and value of the information, all verbatim responses are presented in their entirety with appropriate codes entered for analysis. Throughout the report, verbatim responses by players are included to provide greater insight to the reader. (See Appendix C - Technical Report for complete coding mastersheets and complete player verbatim listings by question.)

ANALYSIS

All analyses were conducted using SPSS v. 9.0. The data for the four surveys were combined into a single file to allow for player segmentation and comparison. Including both raw data and derived measures, there was a total of 535 variables.

Initially, the data were examined to identify Non-Problem and Problem Players. There were three measures included in the questionnaires to assess problem play; self-assessment by the players, the triangulation method of problem play identification developed and introduced by Focal Research Consultants in Phase One of the study, and a modified version of the DSM IV. Given the return-to-sample methodology, the verification process also included a comparison to benchmark measures obtained for respondents in 1997/98.

There were five player segments identified for comparison in the current study (discussed under Study Overview). Frequency tables were produced in order to examine the data distributions and summary measures. Tables were then produced with proportions and means for the total sample as well as each of the five player groups under study (refer to Appendix B of the Technical Report). Within the tables, the Total column reports the statistic of the unweighted total sample. Given the stratified sampling procedure which over-represents problem players, the Total Sample results **can not** be used for making projections to the Nova Scotia total population level.

TESTS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Z-tests (two-tailed, unless otherwise specified; adjusted for finite populations) and Chi-square tests (for which expected values exceeded minimum requirements) were conducted to detect between-group differences.

Mann-Whitney U tests of significance were used for testing medians. T-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used for mean comparisons where appropriate.

Pearson correlation analysis was used for interval level data, while Spearman correlations were conducted for rank-ordered data.

Reported significance levels fall into two levels, $p<.05$ and $p<.10$. Due to the sample sizes, and the exploratory nature of the analysis, it was felt that differences found at the 90% confidence level may have important significance and, thus, a need to minimize Type II as well as Type I errors is indicated.

PROBLEM GAMBLING MEASURE

SELF-REPORTED PROBLEM GAMBLING

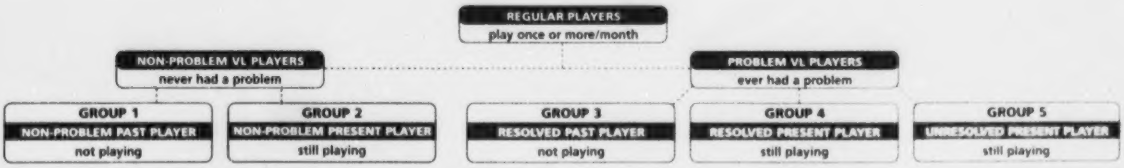
There is a growing consensus that a new or "complimentary research approach to the mental disorder model" is needed to "sustain research interest and possibly facilitate progress to.... an understanding of the psychological processes that determine pathological gambling." (Dickerson & Baron, 1999). Schaffer et al (1997) has also questioned the value of prevalence studies using the popular diagnostic measures in generating social and public health policy, and suggested that future research on problem gambling should move towards a more practical assessment of disordered gambling.

The problem gambling measure and research methodologies developed by Focal Research for the 1997/98 Nova Scotia Video Lottery Players Survey address many of the methodological concerns noted in the literature and were included in the current study.

VALIDITY OF SELF-REPORTED VL GAMBLING PROBLEMS

While a modified version of the DSM IV was included in the current study to validate the self-report question, it is not without its own problems. The DSM IV is thought to have several limitations in a survey designed to measure problem video lottery gambling at the general population level (e.g., it's use outside of a clinical setting has not been validated, it is not video lottery specific, and it suffers from poor specificity due to the inclusion of both dysfunctional and non-dysfunctional diagnostic criteria (Wakefield, 1997)). As a result of these problems, the DSM IV, and the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) as well, pick-up (diagnose) a significant proportion of false positives, a problem that is exacerbated in a general population setting (Dickerson & Baron, 1999). Nonetheless, the reliability of the scale was tested in the current study and found to be highly reliable ($\alpha=0.84$).

As a result of these limitations, it was first necessary to determine the suitability of the DSM IV by validating it against the triangulation method of identifying problem gamblers designed and used by Focal Research.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

The measure was designed after conducting primary research with both social non-problem VL players and those involved in heavy or problematic play. In-depth interviews were conducted with 24 casual, regular and self-reported problem players. In addition, the questionnaires were assessed in focus group discussions (4) with "social" (n=20) and "heavy" VL gamblers (n=19). A pilot study using a stratified sample of 88 individuals was undertaken to confirm the problem player segmentation and found to be highly reliable (Cronbach's Alpha = .869).[1] It was assumed that the Alpha measurement would drop when calculated using a different sample. However, in the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, Cronbach's Alpha remained constant at .862.

Given that Focal Research's problem gambling measure is grounded in the experiences and psychopathology of the players, it is considered to have face and content validity. The convergent validity of the measure was verified in the 1997/98 Nova Scotia Video Lottery Players Survey. Problem VL Gamblers consistently scored significantly higher than Non-Problem VL Gamblers on a number of other related measures such as patronage at video lottery locations, video lottery expenditure, other gaming expenditure, length of time playing video lottery, chasing behaviour, attitudes and outcomes. The reliability of the method, adjusted for past involvement in problem VL play, was measured in the current study and found to be very high (α=0.79). According to Dickerson & Baron (1999), the methodology and results of the approach adopted represent "a model for future research in its generation of a unique data base of significance to all aspects of social policy and treatment service development."

As part of the validation process, the two problem gambling classifications were collapsed to form a single problem gambling category. Subsequently, both the DSM IV and the Focal Research Problem Gambling Measure were dichotomous yes/no measures and the level of agreement between the two could be measured using Cohen's (1960) kappa. Kappa is the "difference between the observed degree of agreement plus the degree of agreement expected to occur by chance, relative to the degree of agreement that would occur by chance alone" (Lilienfeld & Stolley, 1994). The results showed that the classification for 141 of 181 respondents to be in agreement suggesting that there is a moderate level of agreement between the two measures (k=.50). Based on these findings, the DSM IV was thought to be reasonably effective in validating the self-report measure of problem gambling.

Among the 181 persons in the current study, 54% reported that, at some time, they had a problem with spending too much time and/or money playing VLT's. Furthermore, approximately half of the problem players (n=52) indicated they had resolved their VL problems. Based on the modified DSM IV criteria, there is an 80% level of agreement with players' self-reports (k=.61), suggesting that there is substantial agreement between the player's own identification of his or her play as problematic and the DSM IV assessment of problem play.

Of those reporting a problem that was not picked up by the DSM IV (n=33), 72% (n=24) reported having completely resolved their problem, on average one year ago (based on the median). This is consistent with the Focal Research Measure and the players' perception that they were no longer involved in problem VL play. Of the remaining nine problem players who did not meet the DSM IV criteria for problem gambling, four had partially resolved their problem (two within the last year), and none scored higher than 2 on the 10 DSM IV items.

Of those not reporting a VL gambling problem who are classified as problematic by the DSM IV (n=3), all just meet the minimum criteria for problem player classification (3 out of 10). All three reported that the amount of money they spent playing VL increased over time and that they had borrowed money to either play VL or

---

[1] Cronbach's Alpha is a commonly used measured of reliability for a set of two or more construct indicators. Values range from 0 to 1.0, with high values indicating higher reliability among the indicators.

to solve a financial problem caused by playing VLT's. Two of the three had chased their losses playing VLT's. However, these individuals did not perceive their play as problematic, nor trigger on the Focal Research Measure of Problem VL Gambling.

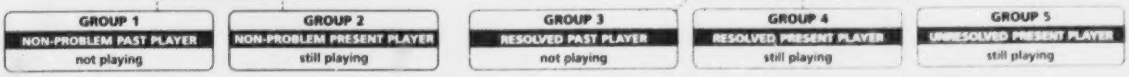
Of those individuals operationally defined as Unresolved Players in the current analysis, 80% also trigger for problem play on the DSM IV items.

Based on these findings, it appears that the self-report measure has high validity. Furthermore, for provision of treatment prevention and support services, those who self-identify their play as problematic are more likely to seek out information or assistance (see 1997/98 NS VL Regular Players' Study). Thus, self-reported problem VL play may provide a practical assessment in allocating resources and designing treatment and support services.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge concerning how and why players develop problems with video lottery, and those factors associated with problem resolution outcomes. While the study design used is very helpful in addressing these important questions, there are limitations that must be addressed. Since exposure and effect have been measured at the same time, it is sometimes difficult to determine the temporal sequence of events. Therefore, causality cannot always be determined. In many cases the authors have identified the possibility of spurious relationships, common underlying factors or the uncertainty of the direction of causality when significant relationships are found. Where possible the authors have relied on past research, and theory to eliminate alternative hypotheses. In the end the reader must realize that relationships are identified, but that the causality remains a hypothesis until experiments and field tests can confirm the efficacy of recommended actions that may result from the results of this research.

Apart from causality, there is also the issue of recall bias, which is a form of measurement error common to retrospective study designs. Recall bias is an issue if the various groups under study recall past events differentially (due to knowledge, selective memory, guilt, therapy etc.). Those with a gambling problem, for example, may be more likely to report past events that rationalize the development of their gambling problems. If so, the degree of the relationship between these past events and problem gambling could be exaggerated. Recall bias can also have the opposite effect where the strength of the relationship is underestimated. Non-problem respondents, for example, might underreport certain past events due to non-concern with remembering. Regardless, the authors have attempted to present the players' responses as accurately as possible to stimulate debate and further research in this area.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

STUDY OVERVIEW

The following report presents a comparative overview of in-depth interviews conducted with 181 randomly selected Video Lottery Players who participated in the 1997/98 NS Regular VL Players' Study and, at some time in the past, had stopped or reduced their regular VL play. This included both Non-Problem and Problem VL Players.

To determine the factors contributing to the development and resolution of problems with VL gambling, study respondents were segmented into two primary groups and five secondary groups for comparison purposes.

The primary segmentation was based on involvement in problem VL play to distinguish Non-Problem Players (n=83) from Problem VL Players (n=98). Those respondents identified as having ever been involved in problem VL gambling, in the past or presently, were included in the Problem Player segment. Only those who have never experienced any problems with their video lottery gambling were assigned to the Non-Problem Player group.

The Non-Problem Player versus the Problem Player comparison was used to determine what, if any, differences exist in certain motivations, attitudes or early play behaviours among those who do or do not subsequently develop problems with their VL gambling.

The secondary segmentation was undertaken to gain additional insight as to the factors impacting problem resolution. The players were divided into five segments based on their current play behaviour (i.e., past versus present play) and, in the case of the Problem VL Players, whether or not their problem VL gambling has been resolved or not (Resolved versus Unresolved).

There are two Non-Problem Player Segments:

- **Non-Problem Past Players (n=46);**
- **Non-Problem Present Players (n=37).**

The comparison between Non-Problem Past and Present Players was undertaken to assess, independently of problem VL gambling, what factors, if any, differentiate those who stop playing VLT's from those who continue to engage in the activity.

There are three Problem Player Segments:

- **Resolved Past Players (n=24);**
- **Resolved Present Players (n=28);**
- **Unresolved Present Players (n=46).**

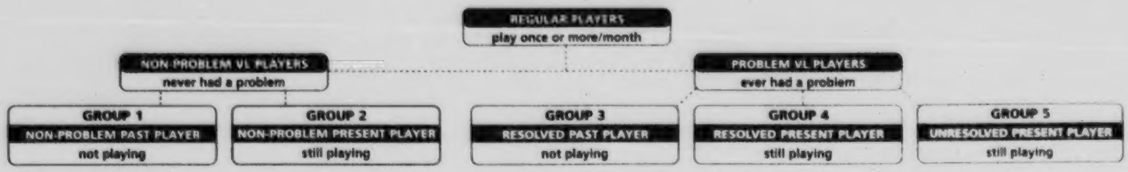
The Problem Player segmentation was undertaken to assess what factors, if any, comparatively differentiate among those who resolved their problem VL gambling through abstinence/stopping play (Resolved Past Players), those who resolved their problem VL gambling and continue to play (Resolved Present Players) and those who continue to be involved in on-going problem VL gambling (Unresolved Present Players).

For the purposes of the current analysis, only those Problem Players reporting complete resolution of their VL gambling problem are included in the Resolved Player segments. Those reporting only partial or non-resolution of their problem VL play, all of whom are continuing to engage in the activity, are collectively included in the Unresolved Player group.

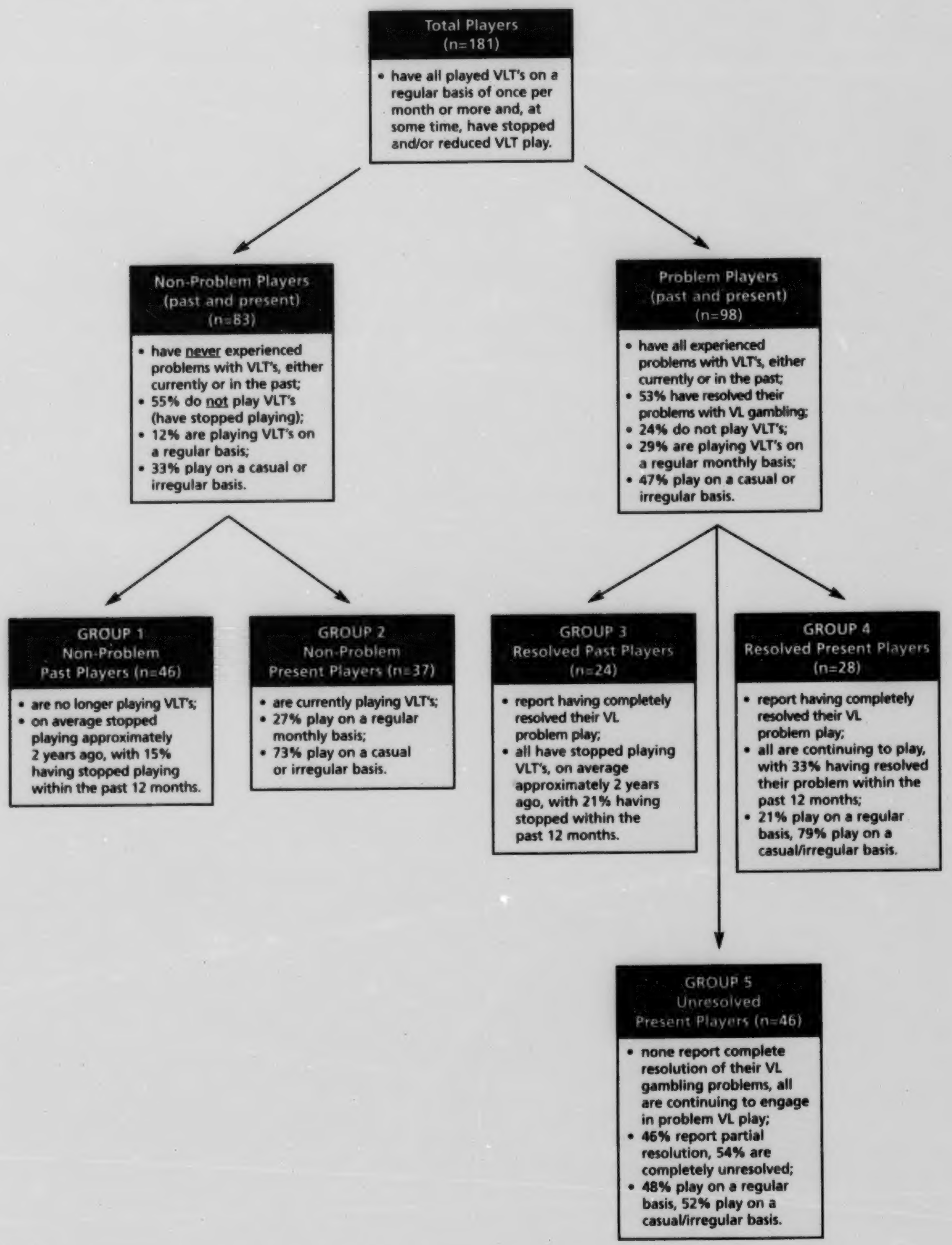
While the segmentation of Problem Players is based on both current play behaviour and self-reported problem resolution, an operational definition was applied to ensure consistency within the segments. There were two respondents who specifically reported their VL gambling problem remains unresolved, although they had not played any VLT's for 24 months and 28 months, respectively. Upon further examination, both respondents had taken part in GA programs and expressed the belief that their VL problem is an on-going condition. These respondents had not taken part in VL gambling for two years or more and, thus, their behaviours, attitudes and other survey responses differed significantly from those Unresolved Players who continue to be involved in problem VL gambling. For the purpose of the current study, and to avoid confounding within-segment results, these two players were classified as Resolved Past Players.

There were also three Non-Problem Players who were subsequently reclassified as Problem Players (1 Resolved Past Player, 1 Resolved Present Player, and 1 Unresolved Player). During the initial survey screen, these individuals had indicated they had never experienced any problems with their play. In two cases, past and current "addiction" was specifically mentioned, with one individual having sought professional assistance. All three individuals triggered on the problem gambling measure developed by Focal Research during the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, with one individual scoring on both the DSM IV and Focal Research's measures for current problem play. Again, to avoid confounding within-segment results, all three players were reassigned to reflect their play behaviour (Past versus Present) and current problem resolution play status (Resolved versus Unresolved).

Throughout the report, **Past Players** refers to those Regular VL Players who have deliberately stopped playing VLT's altogether, while **Present Players** refers to those who continue to play VLT's at any level (on a casual or regular basis).


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

SEGMENTATION MODEL



Total Players (n=181)

- have all played VLT's on a regular basis of once per month or more and, at some time, have stopped and/or reduced VLT play.

Non-Problem Players (past and present) (n=83)

- have never experienced problems with VLT's, either currently or in the past;
- 55% do not play VLT's (have stopped playing);
- 12% are playing VLT's on a regular basis;
- 33% play on a casual or irregular basis.

Problem Players (past and present) (n=98)

- have all experienced problems with VLT's, either currently or in the past;
- 53% have resolved their problems with VL gambling;
- 24% do not play VLT's;
- 29% are playing VLT's on a regular monthly basis;
- 47% play on a casual or irregular basis.

GROUP 1 Non-Problem Past Players (n=46)

- are no longer playing VLT's;
- on average stopped playing approximately 2 years ago, with 15% having stopped playing within the past 12 months.

GROUP 2 Non-Problem Present Players (n=37)

- are currently playing VLT's;
- 27% play on a regular monthly basis;
- 73% play on a casual or irregular basis.

GROUP 3 Resolved Past Players (n=24)

- report having completely resolved their VL problem play;
- all have stopped playing VLT's, on average approximately 2 years ago, with 21% having stopped within the past 12 months.

GROUP 4 Resolved Present Players (n=28)

- report having completely resolved their VL problem play;
- all are continuing to play, with 33% having resolved their problem within the past 12 months;
- 21% play on a regular basis, 79% play on a casual/irregular basis.

GROUP 5 Unresolved Present Players (n=46)

- none report complete resolution of their VL gambling problems, all are continuing to engage in problem VL play;
- 46% report partial resolution, 54% are completely unresolved;
- 48% play on a regular basis, 52% play on a casual/irregular basis.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES - NON-PROBLEM VERSUS PROBLEM PLAYERS (PAST AND PRESENT)

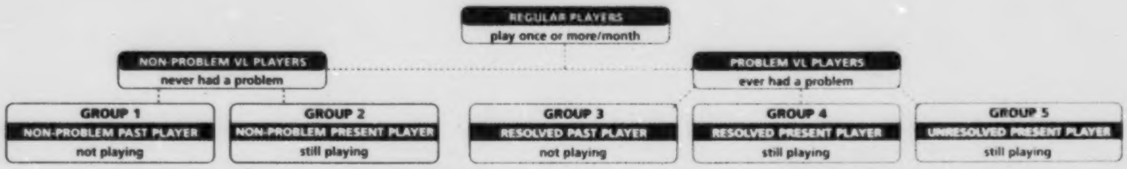
The following table presents a demographic overview of study participants. The profiles describe and compare those players who have never experienced a problem with their VL play (Non-Problem Players, past and present) with those who have experienced problems with their play of VLT's (in the past, or presently). It should be kept in mind that, at some time, all study participants were involved in regular play of VLT's (played at least once a month or more on a continuous basis). Furthermore, all study respondents have stopped and/or reduced their VL play at some time in the past.

	Non-Problem (n=83)	Problem Players (n=98)
Gender:		
Male	64%	62%
Female	36%	38%
Age Category:		
19 to 29 years	18%	18%
30 to 39 years	40%	31%
40 to 49 years	19%	26%
50 to 59 years	13%	21%
60+ years	10%	4%
Average Age (years)	40.2	40.6
Marital Status:		
Single	**13%**	**24%**
Married/Co-habitating	74%	64%
Divorced/Separated	11%	9%
Widowed	2%	3%
Occupation Category:		
White Collar	16%	20%
Grey Collar	26%	24%
Blue Collar	28%	36%
Income Supported	30%	20%
Work Status:		
Working Full-Time	55%	66%
Working Part-Time	14%	13%
Unemployed	7%	5%
Student	1%	1%
Homemaker	8%	2%
Retired	10%	9%
Disabled	4%	3%

	Non-Problem (n=83)	Problem Players (n=98)
Education Category:		
High School or Less	55%	53%
Trade School/Non-Univ.	26%	32%
Univ. Without Degree	6%	6%
Univ. With Degree	12%	8%
Post Graduate Degree	----	1%
Income Category:		
Less than $25,000	16%	16%
$25,001 to $35,000	25%	21%
$35,001 to $45,000	23%	19%
$45,001 to $60,000	20%	22%
$60,001 to $75,000	6%	12%
More than $75,000	6%	2%
Refused/Don't Know	4%	6%
Mother Tongue:		
English	93%	92%
French	6%	5%
English/French	1%	----
Other	----	3%
Area of Residence:		
Urban	52%	60%
Rural	48%	40%

▨ *indicates differences between segments significant at the 90%+ confidence level.*

Overall, the demographic characteristics of Non-Problem Players who have reduced and/or stopped playing VLT's at some time in the past and Problem VLT Players are highly similar. In fact, the only statistically significant difference (p<.10) is that those who have experienced problems with VL play are nearly twice as likely to be single than Non-Problem Players (24% versus 13%). These results suggest there are few demographic characteristics, which are influencing the between-group differences, observed in the current study.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES - NON-PROBLEM VERSUS PROBLEM PLAYERS (PAST AND PRESENT)

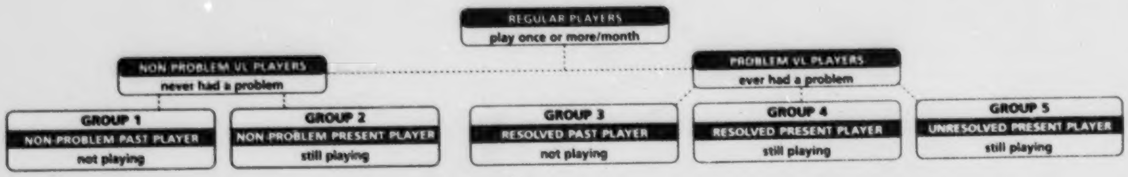
The following table presents a demographic overview of study participants. The profiles describe and compare those players who have never experienced a problem with their VL play (Non-Problem Players, past and present) with those who have experienced problems with their play of VLT's (in the past, or presently). It should be kept in mind that, at some time, all study participants were involved in regular play of VLT's (played at least once a month or more on a continuous basis). Furthermore, all study respondents have stopped and/or reduced their VL play at some time in the past.

	Non-Problem (n=83)	**Problem Players (n=98)**
Gender:		
Male	64%	62%
Female	36%	38%
Age Category:		
19 to 29 years	18%	18%
30 to 39 years	40%	31%
40 to 49 years	19%	26%
50 to 59 years	13%	21%
60+ years	10%	4%
Average Age (years)	40.2	40.6
Marital Status:		
Single	**13%**	**24%**
Married/Co-habitating	74%	64%
Divorced/Separated	11%	9%
Widowed	2%	3%
Occupation Category:		
White Collar	16%	20%
Grey Collar	26%	24%
Blue Collar	28%	36%
Income Supported	30%	20%
Work Status:		
Working Full-Time	55%	66%
Working Part-Time	14%	13%
Unemployed	7%	5%
Student	1%	1%
Homemaker	8%	2%
Retired	10%	9%
Disabled	4%	3%

	Non-Problem (n=83)	**Problem Players (n=98)**
Education Category:		
High School or Less	55%	53%
Trade School/Non-Univ.	26%	32%
Univ. Without Degree	6%	6%
Univ. With Degree	12%	8%
Post Graduate Degree	----	1%
Income Category:		
Less than $25,000	16%	16%
$25,001 to $35,000	25%	21%
$35,001 to $45,000	23%	19%
$45,001 to $60,000	20%	22%
$60,001 to $75,000	6%	12%
More than $75,000	6%	2%
Refused/Don't Know	4%	6%
Mother Tongue:		
English	93%	92%
French	6%	5%
English/French	1%	----
Other	----	3%
Area of Residence:		
Urban	52%	60%
Rural	48%	40%

▨ *indicates differences between segments significant at the 90%+ confidence level.*

Overall, the demographic characteristics of Non-Problem Players who have reduced and/or stopped playing VLT's at some time in the past and Problem VLT Players are highly similar. In fact, the only statistically significant difference (p<.10) is that those who have experienced problems with VL play are nearly twice as likely to be single than Non-Problem Players (24% versus 13%). These results suggest there are few demographic characteristics, which are influencing the between-group differences, observed in the current study.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

The demographic profile of study respondents is also comparable to that of Regular VL Players overall (source: 1997/98 NS VL Player's Study, Oct. '98). Problem VL Players are likely to have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Nearly two-thirds are **male** (62%), although it is important to note that once they have taken up regular play, men and women in the study were equally likely to develop problems with their VL play (54% of male and 55% of female participants are classified as Problem Players). However, men and women who have difficulty in controlling or managing their VL play exhibit distinctly different attitudes, motivations and behaviours (e.g., reasons for playing, playing patterns, treatment histories, etc.). These differences will affect strategies for assisting these individuals in managing their VL play.
- Just over half (51%) are **40 years of age or older,** however, Problem Players fall fairly evenly across all age categories.
- Although Problem Players are more inclined than regular players who have never experienced problems with their VL play to be single, the majority (64%) are **married or co-habitating.**
- Most Problem Players are employed **full-time** (66%), and the largest proportion hold **blue collar** jobs (36%).
- There is a slight skew towards lower education levels, with more than half (53%) reporting a **high school** education or less, and another third (32%) indicating **Trade School** training.
- A slight majority (56%) report annual household **income** levels below $45,000.
- Problem Players in Nova Scotia are more likely to reside in **urban** areas than rural (60%/40% split). As noted in the original 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, it appears that accessibility and lifestyle are contributing factors.

In order to gain greater insight and detail in terms of demographic characteristics, the profiles of each of the five sub-segments of VL players were examined and compared.

Again, few demographic distinctions were observed. When comparing the two Non-Problem groups, it was found that Non-Problem Players who continue to play VLT's (Non-Problem Present Players) are more inclined than those who have stopped playing altogether (Non-Problem Past Players) to be:

- separated, widowed or divorced (22% versus 6%);
- employed in Grey Collar occupations (38% versus 17%);
- working on a full-time basis (68% versus 46%);
- educated at a Trade School/Non-University level (35% versus 20%);
- in households with annual income levels between $45,000 and $60,000 (31% versus 13%).

There are some demographic differences among the three Problem Player groups. Compared to players (past and/or present) who have resolved their problems with VLT play, Unresolved Players:

- tend to be older with only 13% under 30 years of age;
- are less inclined to be single than Resolved Past Players (17% versus 38%);
- tend to have lower education levels (63% completed high school or less versus 42% of Resolved Past Players;
- are less inclined to be employed on a full-time basis (56% versus 79% of Resolved Present Players);
- are more likely to be Income Supported (28% versus 8% of Resolved Past Players);
- are less likely to live in higher-income households (9% have household income levels over $60,000 versus 39% of Resolved Past Players).

As noted in previous research, Problem VL Gamblers come from all walks of life and present few demographic characteristics to differentiate them from VL Players in general in Nova Scotia (see 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey). Consistent with the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, these findings suggest that older adults, those who are not married, those having lower education and/or lower socioeconomic status are not only more likely to develop problems with their VL gambling (once they have taken up regular playing patterns), but also appear to be less successful in resolving their problem play over time. Given the greater tendency for males to frequent locations that offer the machines, and to be Regular VL Players, men also comprise a greater proportion of those developing problems with video lottery. Likewise, accessibility is most likely impacting the higher incidence of problem VL gambling in urban centres throughout the province. However, despite these skews, women and those living in rural areas of Nova Scotia who also develop VL problems will require treatment and/or assistance that recognizes the unique needs of these particular groups. Communication materials must keep in mind that, similar to the population in general, the majority of those most in need of support will have high school to trade school education levels. In addition, the majority of Problem VL Gamblers are employed and, thus, the service delivery should accommodate the provision of assistance outside of typical work hours. The lack or absence of a spouse or partner is associated with both problem development and on-going involvement in problem play. However, the tendency for most Problem VL Gamblers to be married/co-habitating suggests that problem gambling has a significant impact for spouses and other family members which has implications for support service and treatment.

PROFILE OF VLT PLAY BEHAVIOURS

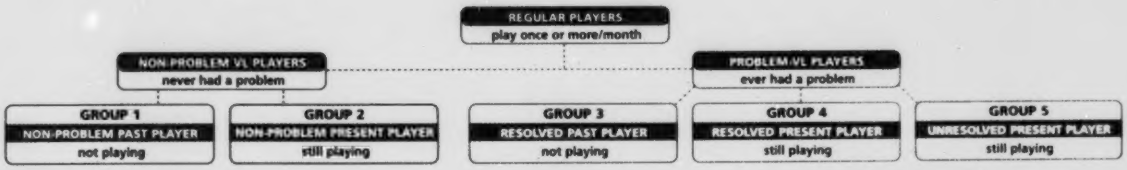
EARLY VL PLAY BEHAVIOUR

The following section examines early VL play behaviours to determine if there are any differences associated with the development of VL problems among the five player groups. All respondents were questioned on the following:

- length of time since first trying VLT's (trial);
- motivations for trial ("why did they first try the games?");
- "who" initiated trial or introduced play;
- circumstances surrounding the introduction to play ("what was happening/what were they doing at the time of trial?");
- game outcomes at point of trial ("did you win/lose?");
- length of time to adoption of regular play patterns;
- reasons for adopting regular VL play;
- experience of early big wins.

INTRODUCTION TO PLAY

Overall, 81% of players could remember the first time they tried VLT's, of which the median length of time was 8 years ago (during 1992). Collectively, there were no differences between Non-Problem and Problem Players, with respect to how long ago they first tried the games. However, there were significant differences observed among the three Problem Player segments. On average, Resolved Past Players had first tried VLT's 8.7 years ago (median 8.4


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

As noted in previous research, Problem VL Gamblers come from all walks of life and present few demographic characteristics to differentiate them from VL Players in general in Nova Scotia (see 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey). Consistent with the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, these findings suggest that older adults, those who are not married, those having lower education and/or lower socioeconomic status are not only more likely to develop problems with their VL gambling (once they have taken up regular playing patterns), but also appear to be less successful in resolving their problem play over time. Given the greater tendency for males to frequent locations that offer the machines, and to be Regular VL Players, men also comprise a greater proportion of those developing problems with video lottery. Likewise, accessibility is most likely impacting the higher incidence of problem VL gambling in urban centres throughout the province.

However, despite these skews, women and those living in rural areas of Nova Scotia who also develop VL problems will require treatment and/or assistance that recognizes the unique needs of these particular groups. Communication materials must keep in mind that, similar to the population in general, the majority of those most in need of support will have high school to trade school education levels. In addition, the majority of Problem VL Gamblers are employed and, thus, the service delivery should accommodate the provision of assistance outside of typical work hours. The lack or absence of a spouse or partner is associated with both problem development and on-going involvement in problem play. However, the tendency for most Problem VL Gamblers to be married/co-habitating suggests that problem gambling has a significant impact for spouses and other family members which has implications for support service and treatment.

PROFILE OF VLT PLAY BEHAVIOURS

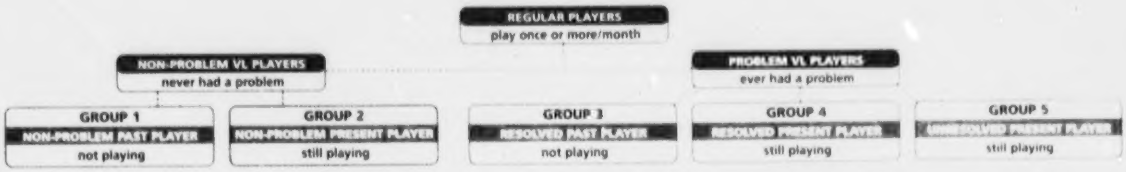
EARLY VL PLAY BEHAVIOUR

The following section examines early VL play behaviours to determine if there are any differences associated with the development of VL problems among the five player groups. All respondents were questioned on the following:

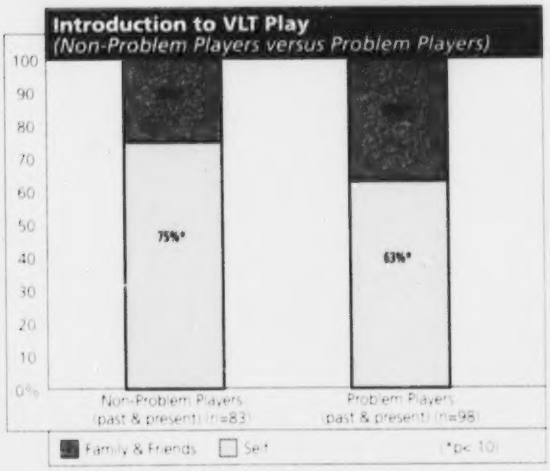
- length of time since first trying VLT's (trial);
- motivations for trial ("why did they first try the games?");
- "who" initiated trial or introduced play;
- circumstances surrounding the introduction to play ("what was happening/what were they doing at the time of trial?");
- game outcomes at point of trial ("did you win/lose?");
- length of time to adoption of regular play patterns;
- reasons for adopting regular VL play;
- experience of early big wins.

INTRODUCTION TO PLAY

Overall, 81% of players could remember the first time they tried VLT's, of which the median length of time was 8 years ago (during 1992). Collectively, there were no differences between Non-Problem and Problem Players, with respect to how long ago they first tried the games. However, there were significant differences observed among the three Problem Player segments. On average, Resolved Past Players had first tried VLT's 8.7 years ago (median 8.4


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

years), which coincides with the introduction of the government regulated machines in Nova Scotia in May 1991. In contrast, the Resolved Present Players (7.0 years) and the Unresolved Players (7.3 years), on average, tended to have first tried the games one year later.

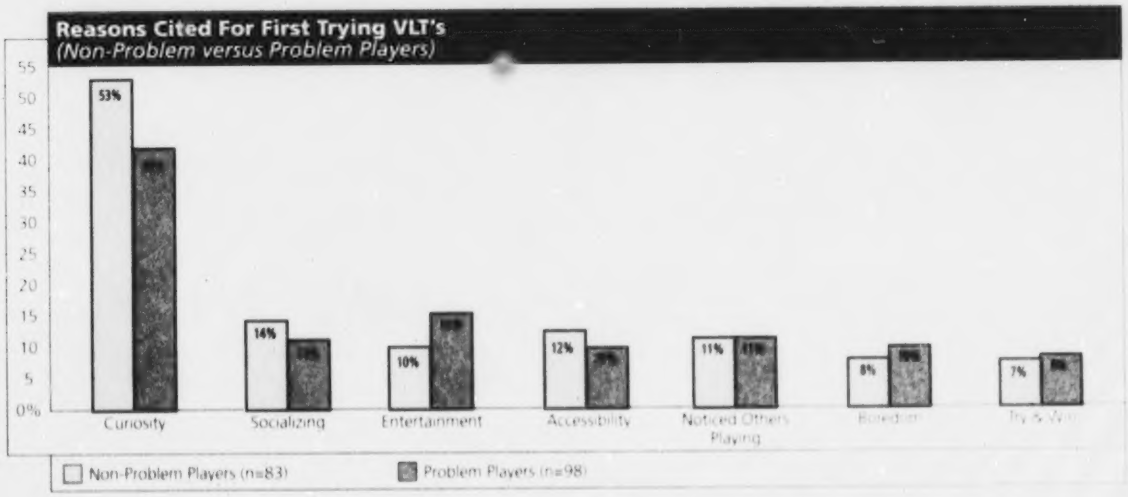


Introduction to VLT Play
(Non-Problem Players versus Problem Players)

There were some notable differences in terms of "who" introduced players to the machines. Although the majority of players in all segments indicated they had initiated trial on their own, Problem Players were significantly more likely than Non-Problem Players to note the role of friends and family members in introducing play (37% versus 25%; p<.10).

Among the three Problem Player segments, those who have stopped playing VLT's (Resolved Past Players) were more inclined to report that friends had introduced play (38%) rather than family members (4%). In contrast, those who continue to be involved in VL gambling, with or without on-going problems (Resolved Present Players and Unresolved Players), more often indicated a spouse or family member had introduced play (15%). For these two Problem Player groups, family member involvement was almost as high as that noted for friends (18% to 20%). Thus, **from the time of initial contact with the games, Problem Players who have stopped playing VLT's altogether report lower VLT involvement levels by direct family members.**

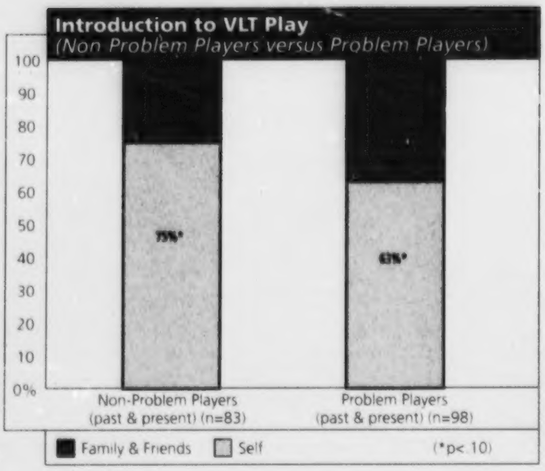
MOTIVATIONS FOR FIRST TRYING VLT'S



Reasons Cited For First Trying VLT's
(Non-Problem versus Problem Players)

In general, there appears to be few differences among the segments in the reasons given for first trying VLT's.

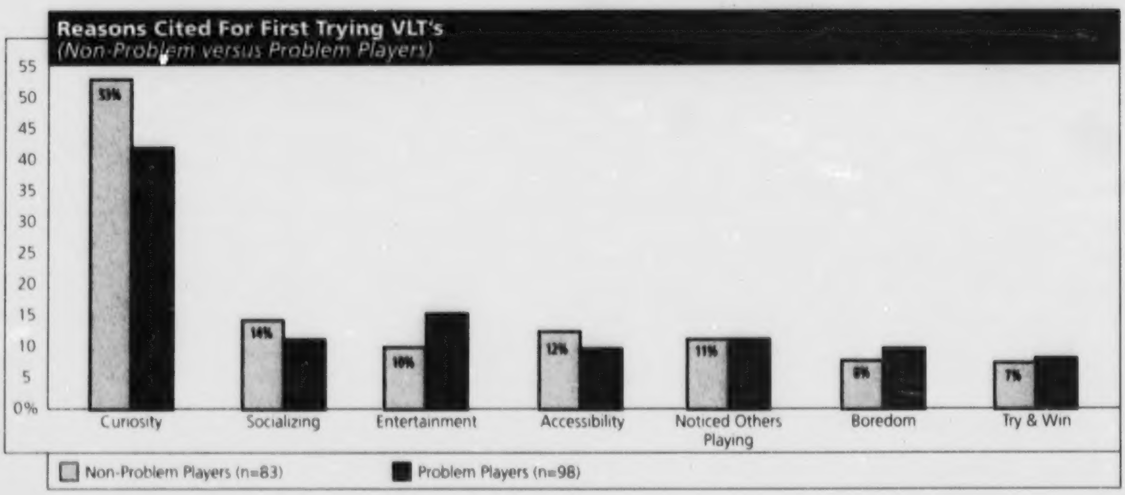
years), which coincides with the introduction of the government regulated machines in Nova Scotia in May 1991. In contrast, the Resolved Present Players (7.0 years) and the Unresolved Players (7.3 years), on average, tended to have first tried the games one year later.



There were some notable differences in terms of "who" introduced players to the machines. Although the majority of players in all segments indicated they had initiated trial on their own, Problem Players were significantly more likely than Non-Problem Players to note the role of friends and family members in introducing play (37% versus 25%; p<.10).

Among the three Problem Player segments, those who have stopped playing VLT's (Resolved Past Players) were more inclined to report that friends had introduced play (38%) rather than family members (4%). In contrast, those who continue to be involved in VL gambling, with or without on-going problems (Resolved Present Players and Unresolved Players), more often indicated a spouse or family member had introduced play (15%). For these two Problem Player groups, family member involvement was almost as high as that noted for friends (18% to 20%). Thus, **from the time of initial contact with the games, Problem Players who have stopped playing VLT's altogether report lower VLT involvement levels by direct family members.**

MOTIVATIONS FOR FIRST TRYING VLT'S



In general, there appears to be few differences among the segments in the reasons given for first trying VLT's.

The most often mentioned motivation for first trying the machines was **curiosity.** Approximately half of all players indicated that they "just wanted to see what the machines were like."

"Just to try something different and it was a different game to play."
(Male, 31 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"I wanted to see what the games were like because they were different."
(Male, 45 years, Non-Problem Present Player)

"I was in a store and finally saw one of those VLT machines. There was a lot of hype about them being fun so I just wanted to see what they were like to play, so I did." (Male, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I was curious to see what they were like, wanted to figure them out."
(Female, 35 years, Resolved Present Player)

"Curiosity and amusement because they were there."
(Male, 23 years, Unresolved Player)

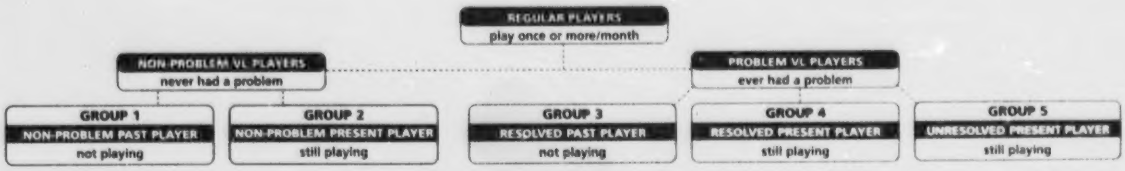
Socializing with friends and family (13%), as well as the **fun and entertainment** aspect (13%) were equally likely to evoke trial from almost all players. The only notable exception among the player segments was that Resolved Present Players were more likely than Resolved Past Players to report having initially responded to the games for their entertainment value (25% versus 8%, p<.10). In fact, Resolved Present Players who are continuing to play VLT's were the only group to note the entertainment appeal of the games (25%) almost as often as curiosity (31%) in motivating trial of the games.

"My friend and I were at a bar having a couple of drinks and put $10 in for the fun of it." (Male, 32 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"My husband was playing, I didn't know how to play so I asked him to show me and he did." (Female, 54 years, Resolved Present Player)

"They looked fun to play so why not?" (Male, 35 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Just because they were there, other people were playing and it looked like fun."
(Male, 30 years, Unresolved Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

Simply the fact that the **machines were there and accessible** was specifically mentioned by 11% of all players. **Watching others playing** (11%), **boredom or to fill time** (9%) and **the desire to win money** (8%) were also cited as influencing players to try the games, with no notable differences among any of the player segments.

"I watched other people play them and then I threw a couple of quarters in." (Female, 33 years, Non-Problem Player)

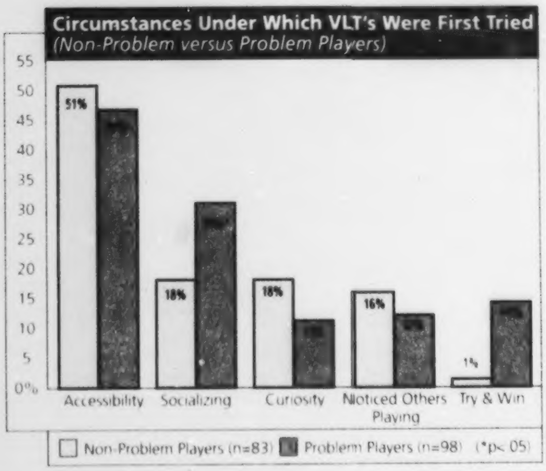
"I was having lunch in a restaurant/lounge and tried [the VLT's] to kill time." (Male, 55 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"To see if I was going to win, other people were playing and I wanted to see how they worked." (Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Because I got a job at a bowling alley and they were there." (Male, 25 years, Unresolved Player)

"They were in the legion and I saw them and played." (Male, 41 years, Unresolved Player)

CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH INTRODUCTION OCCURRED



The accessibility of VLT's appears to be the most influential factor in how players are first introduced to the machines. For approximately half of all players, the presence of the machines was compelling enough to elicit trial. Curiosity and other motivational factors are very likely augmenting the effects of accessibility. Thus, **the machines provide the stimulus while other factors such as curiosity, encouragement of friends/ family, and watching others play motivates trial of the games.**

Simply the fact that the **machines were there and accessible** was specifically mentioned by 11% of all players. **Watching others playing** (11%), **boredom or to fill time** (9%) and **the desire to win money** (8%) were also cited as influencing players to try the games, with no notable differences among any of the player segments.

"I watched other people play them and then I threw a couple of quarters in."
(Female, 33 years, Non-Problem Player)

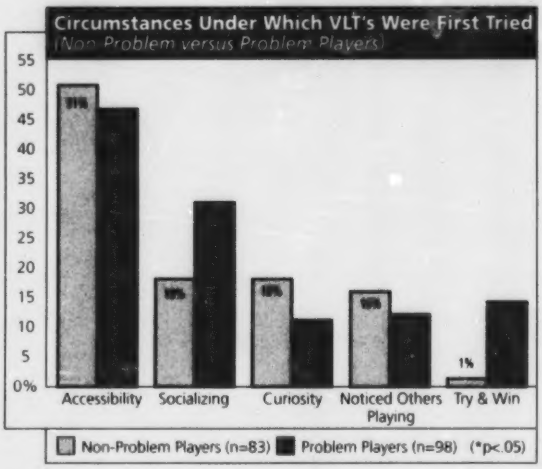
"I was having lunch in a restaurant/lounge and tried [the VLT's] to kill time."
(Male, 55 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"To see if I was going to win, other people were playing and I wanted to see how they worked." (Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Because I got a job at a bowling alley and they were there."
(Male, 25 years, Unresolved Player)

"They were in the legion and I saw them and played."
(Male, 41 years, Unresolved Player)

CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH INTRODUCTION OCCURRED



The accessibility of VLT's appears to be the most influential factor in how players are first introduced to the machines. For approximately half of all players, the presence of the machines was compelling enough to elicit trial. Curiosity and other motivational factors are very likely augmenting the effects of accessibility. Thus, **the machines provide the stimulus while other factors such as curiosity, encouragement of friends/ family, and watching others play motivates trial of the games.**

"Just in for a few beers at the legion and the machines were there."
(Male, 54 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"I saw them in the corner store and decided to try them out."
(Male, 52 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"On the ferry to PEI and there they were." (Male, 37 years, Unresolved Player)

"I saw them in a corner store and I played them. They were different from the scratch ticket games I played all the time." (Male, 53 years, Resolved Present Player)

"Went to the store to get milk and played because they were there and everyone was playing them." (Male, 57 years, Unresolved Player)

"I was at a bar having a drink with the guys." (Male, 32 years, Unresolved Player)

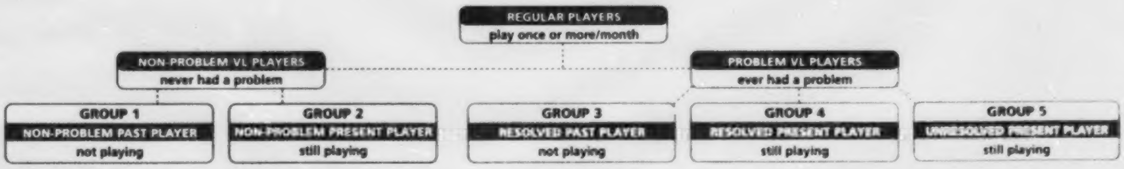
Given that VLT's have always been available in Nova Scotia in facilities or establishments where people typically socialize, it is not surprising that socializing with family or friends also plays an important introductory role. One-quarter (25%) of all respondents indicated that they first tried the machines with family or friends present, and in many cases it was a friend or family member who provided the encouragement or instructions on how to play. **The involvement of friends and family in circumstances surrounding introduction to play was significantly higher for the Problem Player groups than for the Non-Problem Players (31% versus 18%), suggesting that acceptability of the activity and prior involvement of significant others in VL play is more often associated with problem development.**

"I was at a tavern for a while with my son and he was explaining how they worked so I tried them too." (Female, 44 years, Unresolved Player)

"I was at a bar with my friends who were playing so I tried because my friends were playing." (Male, 31 years, Unresolved Player)

"I saw them in the corner store with my husband. He showed me how to play because he was playing them before." (Female, 53 years, Resolved Present Player)

"A friend and I went to the bar and I saw the machines and made the comment that I'd like to try them and my friend showed me how."
(Female, 29 years, Unresolved Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

"I saw my husband playing, I was sitting beside him and decided I wanted to play too."(Female, 33 years, Unresolved Player)

Although accessibility was the leading response among all player groups for how they were first introduced to VLT play, Resolved Past Players were less likely than Non-Problem Players to cite simple exposure to the machines as a trigger for trial (33% versus 51%; p<.10). **Instead, Resolved Past Players (25%) and, to a lesser extent, Unresolved Players (13%) were more likely to report they were motivated by "trying to win money" than those who have never developed a problem with their play (1%).**

"I tried them because somebody told me they had won some money off them."
(Female, 27 years, Unresolved Player)

"Excitement of perhaps being able to win some money."
(Male, 37 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Sitting in a bar and friends were playing them so I thought I'd try them. It was just a game I wanted to try. It was to see if I was lucky enough to win."
(Male, 48 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I tried them on my own. I saw someone win before I went to work one night and thought maybe I could win too." (Female, 34 years, Unresolved Player)

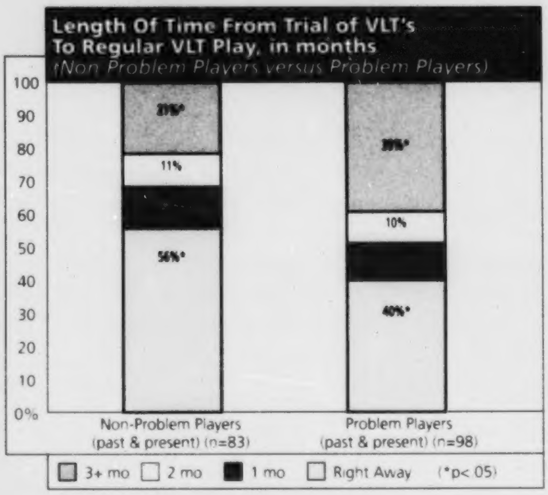
Accessibility plays an important role in how players are first introduced to video lottery. Players reported seeing the machines frequently while in many different venues or out socializing with friends or family. Once exposed, curiosity is noted most often as the primary motivation for trying the games and this does not differ among the player groups. Although most players introduced themselves to the machines, for the Problem Players, friends and family more often play an important introductory role, in the sense that they were previously involved in the activity or provided encouragement and/or instructions on how to play.

Overall, the player groups are more similar than dissimilar regarding the circumstances under which they were first introduced to video lottery and, for the most part, the differences are inconsequential. For the most part, the accessibility of the machine and exposure to play are reported as the primary stimulus for approximately half of all those who have ever tried the games. However, those who subsequently get into trouble playing video lottery were more inclined to indicate socializing with friends and family played a role in their introduction to the games. Thus, greater involvement and/or endorsement of VL play by one's peer or reference group also appears to be associated with problem development. The Problem Player groups (≈14%), especially Resolved Past Players (25%), were also more likely than the Non-Problem Player groups (1%) to describe the chance to win money as a primary reason for trying the games. This suggests that for some Problem VL Gamblers, a desire (or possibly a need) to achieve monetary gain or a preoccupation with "winning" may have preceded the development of their VL gambling problem.

WINNING VERSUS LOSING DURING THE FIRST PLAY SESSION

When asked about whether they had won or lost during their initial encounter with VLT's, study participants were divided in terms of having won (36%) and lost (43%). About one-fifth (20%) could not remember, suggesting the outcome had little lasting significance for them. The player groups were equally likely to report having experienced a win or loss. Moreover, the outcome during the initial session appears to have had no influence on how quickly regular play of VL was taken up (median=2 months for each outcome) or the likelihood of problem development.

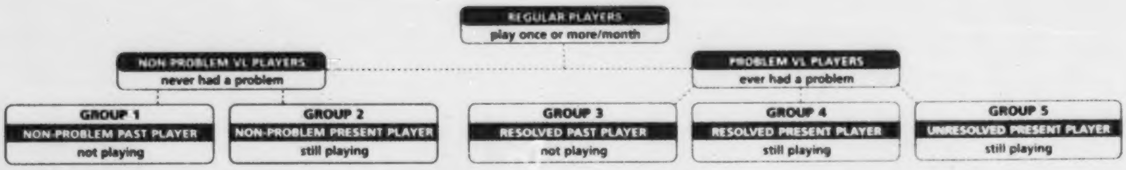
DEVELOPMENT OF REGULAR PLAY PATTERNS



Following the initial play session, the majority of players quickly adopt regular patterns of playing once a month or more frequently. Approximately one-half of the players in the study (47%) indicated they took up regular VL play "right away" and by three months, three-quarters (74%) of those who tried the games were involved in regular VL gambling each month.

Among the player groups, it appears that those who have never had a problem assumed regular playing patterns more quickly than those who subsequently experienced problems with their play. Over half (56%) of Non-Problem Players immediately took up regular play, with 79% involved in regular monthly play of VLT's two months after trying the machines. Comparatively, 40% of Problem Players started playing regularly right after trial, with 61% involved within a two month period. Therefore, the adoption of regular VL playing patterns is fairly immediate after trial for all players, even more so for those who do not develop problems with their play.

Once regular playing patterns are adopted, the activity becomes more persistent for those who experience problems with their play. On average, Problem Players reported involvement in regular monthly VLT play for approximately 4.6 years, as compared to approximately 2.4 years for Non-Problem Players. There is also a greater tendency for the activity to be continuous rather than sporadic "on and off again" in nature for the Problem Players (66% versus Non-Problem Players: 53%; p<.10).


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

"I saw my husband playing, I was sitting beside him and decided I wanted to play too."(Female, 33 years, Unresolved Player)

Although accessibility was the leading response among all player groups for how they were first introduced to VLT play, Resolved Past Players were less likely than Non-Problem Players to cite simple exposure to the machines as a trigger for trial (33% versus 51%; p<.10). **Instead, Resolved Past Players (25%) and, to a lesser extent, Unresolved Players (13%) were more likely to report they were motivated by "trying to win money" than those who have never developed a problem with their play (1%).**

"I tried them because somebody told me they had won some money off them."
(Female, 27 years, Unresolved Player)

"Excitement of perhaps being able to win some money."
(Male, 37 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Sitting in a bar and friends were playing them so I thought I'd try them. It was just a game I wanted to try. It was to see if I was lucky enough to win."
(Male, 48 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I tried them on my own. I saw someone win before I went to work one night and thought maybe I could win too." (Female, 34 years, Unresolved Player)

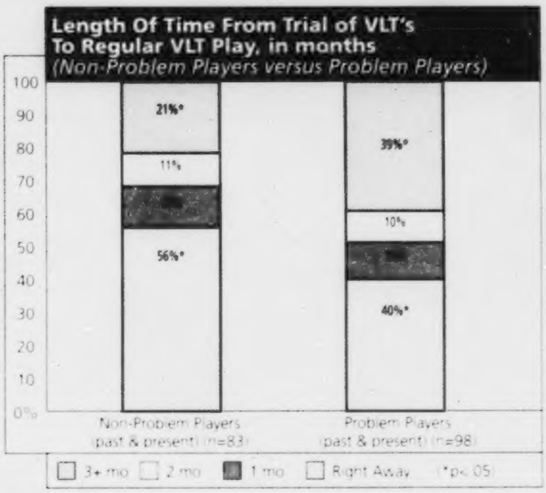
Accessibility plays an important role in how players are first introduced to video lottery. Players reported seeing the machines frequently while in many different venues or out socializing with friends or family. Once exposed, curiosity is noted most often as the primary motivation for trying the games and this does not differ among the player groups. Although most players introduced themselves to the machines, for the Problem Players, friends and family more often play an important introductory role, in the sense that they were previously involved in the activity or provided encouragement and/or instructions on how to play.

Overall, the player groups are more similar than dissimilar regarding the circumstances under which they were first introduced to video lottery and, for the most part, the differences are inconsequential. For the most part, the accessibility of the machine and exposure to play are reported as the primary stimulus for approximately half of all those who have ever tried the games. However, those who subsequently get into trouble playing video lottery were more inclined to indicate socializing with friends and family played a role in their introduction to the games. Thus, greater involvement and/or endorsement of VL play by one's peer or reference group also appears to be associated with problem development. The Problem Player groups (≈14%), especially Resolved Past Players (25%), were also more likely than the Non-Problem Player groups (1%) to describe the chance to win money as a primary reason for trying the games. This suggests that for some Problem VL Gamblers, a desire (or possibly a need) to achieve monetary gain or a preoccupation with "winning" may have preceded the development of their VL gambling problem.

WINNING VERSUS LOSING DURING THE FIRST PLAY SESSION

When asked about whether they had won or lost during their initial encounter with VLT's, study participants were divided in terms of having won (36%) and lost (43%). About one-fifth (20%) could not remember, suggesting the outcome had little lasting significance for them. The player groups were equally likely to report having experienced a win or loss. Moreover, the outcome during the initial session appears to have had no influence on how quickly regular play of VL was taken up (median=2 months for each outcome) or the likelihood of problem development.

DEVELOPMENT OF REGULAR PLAY PATTERNS

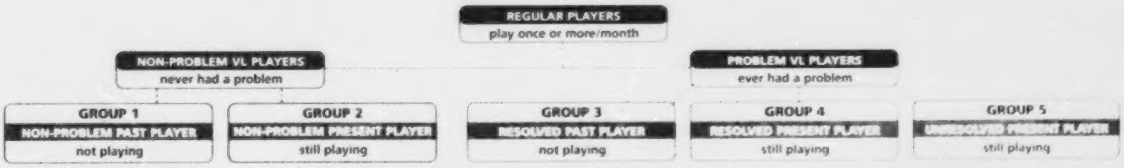


Length Of Time From Trial of VLT's To Regular VLT Play, in months
(Non-Problem Players versus Problem Players)

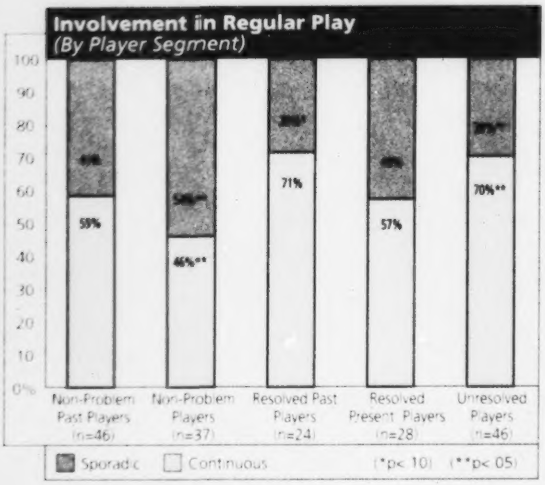
Following the initial play session, the majority of players quickly adopt regular patterns of playing once a month or more frequently. Approximately one-half of the players in the study (47%) indicated they took up regular VL play "right away" and by three months, three-quarters (74%) of those who tried the games were involved in regular VL gambling each month.

Among the player groups, it appears that those who have never had a problem assumed regular playing patterns more quickly than those who subsequently experienced problems with their play. Over half (56%) of Non-Problem Players immediately took up regular play, with 79% involved in regular monthly play of VLT's two months after trying the machines. Comparatively, 40% of Problem Players started playing regularly right after trial, with 61% involved within a two month period. Therefore, the adoption of regular VL playing patterns is fairly immediate after trial for all players, even more so for those who do not develop problems with their play.

Once regular playing patterns are adopted, the activity becomes more persistent for those who experience problems with their play. On average, Problem Players reported involvement in regular monthly VLT play for approximately 4.6 years, as compared to approximately 2.4 years for Non-Problem Players. There is also a greater tendency for the activity to be continuous rather than sporadic "on and off again" in nature for the Problem Players (66% versus Non-Problem Players: 53%; p<.10).



REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

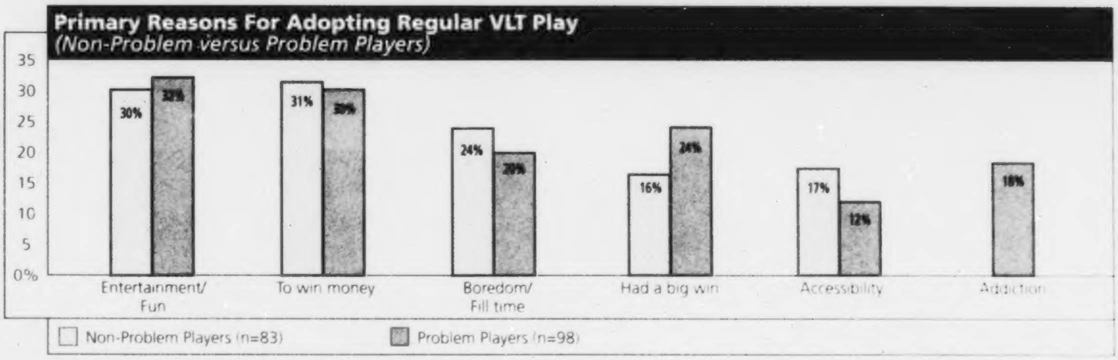


Collectively, Non-Problem Players are differentiated from the Problem Players by being significantly less likely to have reported continuous playing patterns (53% versus 66%). However, there is preliminary evidence that Resolved Problem Players may be more inclined to use and/or benefit from periodic breaks or lapses in their VL play. In fact, the results for the Resolved Present Player group in terms of interrupted versus continuous regular VL play does not differ significantly from that noted for the Non-Problem Players. Play for the Resolved Past Players and Unresolved Players appears to be or to have been more heavily entrenched, with only 29% noting any breaks in regular playing patterns.

The key difference observed is that **Unresolved Players have been involved in regular on-going VL gambling significantly longer than all other player segments (5 years versus 2-3 years). Given that 50% of the Unresolved Problem Players have been involved in regular continuous play of VLT's for five or more years, terminating or reducing and then replacing the activity presents a significant challenge.**

REASONS FOR PLAYING VLT'S MORE REGULARLY

All players, past and present, were queried about the specific reasons for assuming regular play of VLT's. The two leading responses were for **fun and entertainment** and to **try and win money** (31% and 30% respectively). Neither response differs among the player groups suggesting that, **initially, the five player groups are equally likely to be motivated to play more often by the entertainment aspect of VLT's and the chance to win money.** Therefore, while Problem Players are more likely than Non-Problem Players to note that the chance to win money initiated their trial of VLT's (14% versus 1%), all players are equally likely to report this motivation as a reason for taking up regular play (≈30%). It may be that as players gain experience with the machines, the high payout percentages for VLT's (95%),


Primary Reasons For Adopting Regular VLT Play
(Non-Problem versus Problem Players)

relative to most other regulated games of chance available in the province (≈46% or less), leads players to play more often in the expectation of winning money. Thus, the chance to win money, as well as the entertainment value of the games, appears to reinforce on-going play for almost one-third of players, regardless of subsequent involvement in problem play.

"No real reason, just for fun and entertainment. I used to go to the bar to watch the big satellite television. So when I went to watch I always ended up playing." (Male, 35 years, Resolved Past Player)

"It was fun and something my husband and I did for fun and entertainment when we went out for the evening." (Female, 44 years, Non-Problem Present Player)

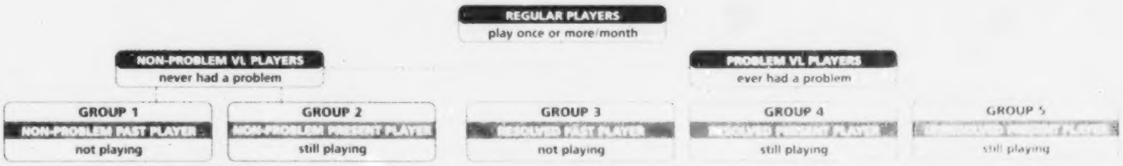
"Because my husband and I would play when we went out together for fun and to see if we could win." (Female, 52 years, Resolved Present Player)

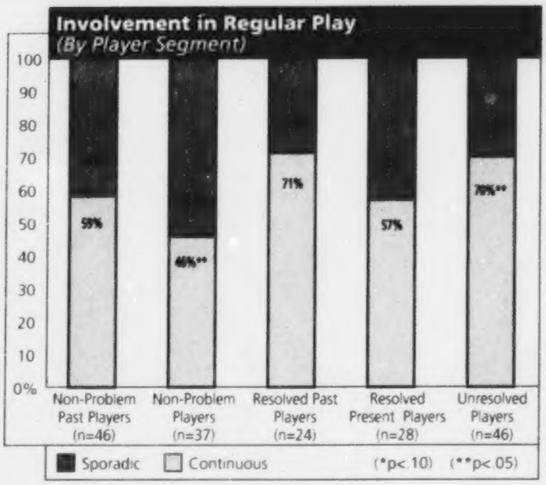
"I liked playing them and to win too. Playing VLT's was a fun way to pass time." (Male, 39 years, Non-Problem Present Player)

"For the excitement of winning money and just for the fun of it." (Male, 42 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I wanted to win more money and I felt playing more would better my chances." (Male, 53 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"The chance to win money. Saw someone win a couple hundred and hoped I would be the next to win. Looking for the big win that never comes." (Male, 51 years, Unresolved Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
still playing

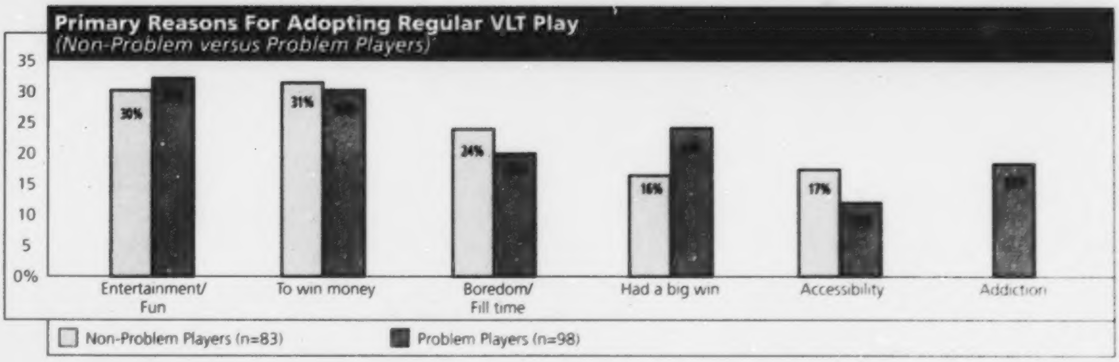


Collectively, Non-Problem Players are differentiated from the Problem Players by being significantly less likely to have reported continuous playing patterns (53% versus 66%). However, there is preliminary evidence that Resolved Problem Players may be more inclined to use and/or benefit from periodic breaks or lapses in their VL play. In fact, the results for the Resolved Present Player group in terms of interrupted versus continuous regular VL play does not differ significantly from that noted for the Non-Problem Players. Play for the Resolved Past Players and Unresolved Players appears to be or to have been more heavily entrenched, with only 29% noting any breaks in regular playing patterns.

The key difference observed is that **Unresolved Players have been involved in regular on-going VL gambling significantly longer than all other player segments (5 years versus 2-3 years). Given that 50% of the Unresolved Problem Players have been involved in regular continuous play of VLT's for five or more years, terminating or reducing and then replacing the activity presents a significant challenge.**

REASONS FOR PLAYING VLT'S MORE REGULARLY

All players, past and present, were queried about the specific reasons for assuming regular play of VLT's. The two leading responses were for **fun and entertainment** and to **try and win money** (31% and 30% respectively). Neither response differs among the player groups suggesting that, **initially, the five player groups are equally likely to be motivated to play more often by the entertainment aspect of VLT's and the chance to win money.** Therefore, while Problem Players are more likely than Non-Problem Players to note that the chance to win money initiated their trial of VLT's (14% versus 1%), all players are equally likely to report this motivation as a reason for taking up regular play (≈30%). It may be that as players gain experience with the machines, the high payout percentages for VLT's (95%),



relative to most other regulated games of chance available in the province (≈46% or less), leads players to play more often in the expectation of winning money. Thus, the chance to win money, as well as the entertainment value of the games, appears to reinforce on-going play for almost one-third of players, regardless of subsequent involvement in problem play.

"No real reason, just for fun and entertainment. I used to go to the bar to watch the big satellite television. So when I went to watch I always ended up playing." (Male, 35 years, Resolved Past Player)

"It was fun and something my husband and I did for fun and entertainment when we went out for the evening." (Female, 44 years, Non-Problem Present Player)

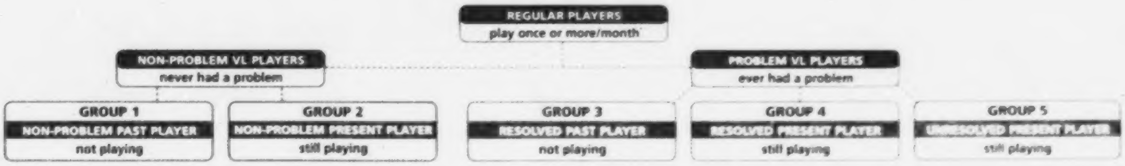
"Because my husband and I would play when we went out together for fun and to see if we could win." (Female, 52 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I liked playing them and to win too. Playing VLT's was a fun way to pass time." (Male, 39 years, Non-Problem Present Player)

"For the excitement of winning money and just for the fun of it." (Male, 42 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I wanted to win more money and I felt playing more would better my chances." (Male, 53 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"The chance to win money. Saw someone win a couple hundred and hoped I would be the next to win. Looking for the big win that never comes." (Male, 51 years, Unresolved Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

"I was trying to win, trying to beat the machine. I never had enough money, so I wanted to have extra by winning on the VLT's."
(Female, 34 years, Resolved Present Player)

Other reasons mentioned for adopting regular VL play were **boredom or to fill time** (22%), **experiencing a big win** (20%), **accessibility** (14%), and **addiction** (11%). There are some notable differences among the player groups. Resolved Present Players are less likely than Resolved Past Players to have taken up regular play in response to boredom (11% versus 29%; p<.10). They were also less likely than the Non-Problem Past Players to report being influenced by the accessibility of the machines (7% versus 24%). Instead, Resolved Present Players were more inclined to be motivated to play regularly because they had a big win early on and thought that they would continue to win (36% versus 14% of Non-Problem Players; p<.05). This early experience of a significant win may lead players to develop unreasonable and persistent expectations about the potential of winning when playing VLT's.

"Because I had a big win and thought I would win every time."
(Female, 27 years, Resolved Present Player)

"Because I had a few big wins at first and that kept me going."
(Male, 49 years, Resolved Present Player)

As expected, only Problem Players, especially Resolved Past Players (25%) and Unresolved Players (20%) attributed their regular playing patterns to addiction. Overall, 18% of all Problem Players reported compulsion or the "urge to play" as being responsible for their increased play levels. This reason is cited just as often as the influence of a big win, or accessibility, suggesting that the internal drive to play was just as significant for these players as external sources in reinforcing play.

"They were addictive. They were in more places than just the bars. I saw them often." (Male, 38 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I got addicted I guess. It's like a magnet and the excitement of it I suppose - the chance of winning money." (Female, 59 years, Unresolved Player)

"They are addictive. I can't really say, I just started playing a lot and I couldn't stop. I don't even know why. I can't narrow it down, I just wanted to play them all the time, but really I don't know exactly why."
(Male, 31 years, Resolved Present Player)

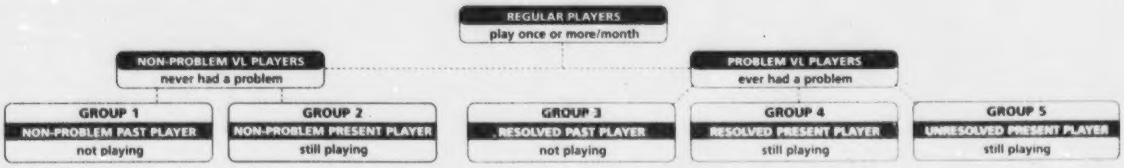
"I just got hooked on the machines, they draw you in to it I guess. I really don't know anything other than that." (Male, 67 years, Unresolved Player)

"I was addicted to them. I had to play them every time I saw one, it seemed like it was calling my name." (Male, 22 years, Unresolved Player)

"You win some, then you go play some more and get hooked. It was all I thought about. I went home and couldn't sleep some nights if I didn't win." (Male, 44 years, Unresolved Player)

The primary reasons given by all players for taking up regular VL play are for fun and entertainment and the chance to win money. There is some evidence to suggest there may be a difference in the degree of monetary reward anticipated by Problem versus Non-Problem Players, with the former group more likely to be seeking higher returns (i.e., bigger wins) from their play. Regardless, there are few differences in motivations among the player groups, although those that exist appear to have implications for problem development. Aside from the entertainment aspect (32%) and the chance to win money (25%), Resolved Present Players also tend to attribute regular playing patterns to having had a "big win" or frequent wins early on during their VL play history (36%). This early win experience may have led them to have unreasonable expectations about the probability of on-going wins. Given that VLT's in Nova Scotia have a 95% payout, it is highly improbable that a series of "big wins" will be sustained over time, yet, it will occur often enough for players to come to believe that a "big win" is realistic and is "just around the corner."

In addition to the "desire to win money" (38%) and the entertainment value (25%), Resolved Past Players are also inclined to report taking up regular play due to "addiction" (25%) and "to fill time or due to boredom" (29%). It is noteworthy that playing to fill time or due to boredom was just as likely to be noted by the Non-Problem Player segments. Therefore, while this measure appears to discriminate between those who resolved their problem VL gambling through stopping (Resolved Past Players) versus those using controlled play (Resolved Present Players) (29% versus 11%; p<.10), it does not differentiate between Problem and Non-Problem Players in general. The identification of their behaviour as addictive tends to be more predominant for Resolved Past Players who have solved their VL play through abstinence. Thus, an abstinence approach may be adopted in response to perceptions that the player has lost control to the addiction. Resolved Past Players are also significantly more likely to have sought treatment or assistance (see Formal Treatment discussion) to deal with their problem. Consequently, recognition and acceptance of their behaviour as addictive may have precipitated stopping, and/or may be associated directly or indirectly with having been involved in formal treatment programs or services.

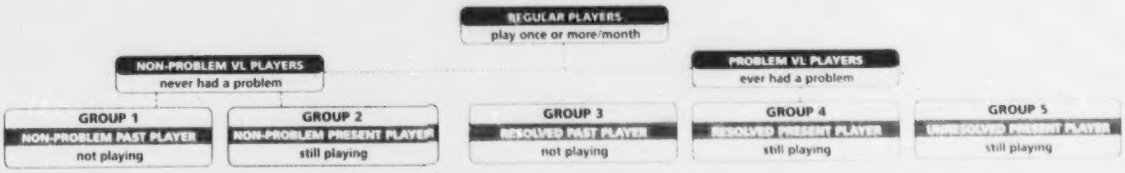

REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

"I was addicted to them. I had to play them every time I saw one, it seemed like it was calling my name." (Male, 22 years, Unresolved Player)

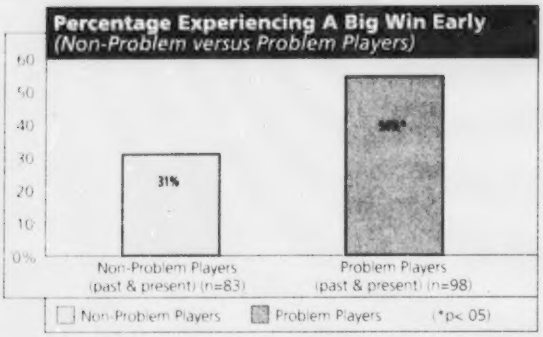
"You win some, then you go play some more and get hooked. It was all I thought about. I went home and couldn't sleep some nights if I didn't win." (Male, 44 years, Unresolved Player)

The primary reasons given by all players for taking up regular VL play are for fun and entertainment and the chance to win money. There is some evidence to suggest there may be a difference in the degree of monetary reward anticipated by Problem versus Non-Problem Players, with the former group more likely to be seeking higher returns (i.e., bigger wins) from their play. Regardless, there are few differences in motivations among the player groups, although those that exist appear to have implications for problem development. Aside from the entertainment aspect (32%) and the chance to win money (25%), Resolved Present Players also tend to attribute regular playing patterns to having had a "big win" or frequent wins early on during their VL play history (36%). This early win experience may have led them to have unreasonable expectations about the probability of on-going wins. Given that VLT's in Nova Scotia have a 95% payout, it is highly improbable that a series of "big wins" will be sustained over time, yet, it will occur often enough for players to come to believe that a "big win" is realistic and is "just around the corner."

In addition to the "desire to win money" (38%) and the entertainment value (25%), Resolved Past Players are also inclined to report taking up regular play due to "addiction" (25%) and "to fill time or due to boredom" (29%). It is noteworthy that playing to fill time or due to boredom was just as likely to be noted by the Non-Problem Player segments. Therefore, while this measure appears to discriminate between those who resolved their problem VL gambling through stopping (Resolved Past Players) versus those using controlled play (Resolved Present Players) (29% versus 11%; p<.10), it does not differentiate between Problem and Non-Problem Players in general. The identification of their behaviour as addictive tends to be more predominant for Resolved Past Players who have solved their VL play through abstinence. Thus, an abstinence approach may be adopted in response to perceptions that the player has lost control to the addiction. Resolved Past Players are also significantly more likely to have sought treatment or assistance (see Formal Treatment discussion) to deal with their problem. Consequently, recognition and acceptance of their behaviour as addictive may have precipitated stopping, and/or may be associated directly or indirectly with having been involved in formal treatment programs or services.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

EXPERIENCING A BIG WIN EARLY



Percentage Experiencing A Big Win Early
(Non-Problem versus Problem Players)

Overall, 44% of participants had experienced what they considered to be a "big win" when they first started playing VLT's on a regular basis. While the interpretation of a big win varied considerably (the dollar amount ranged from $5 to $2,500), the median dollar amount was $300. Problem Players, past or present, were more likely than Non-Problem Players to have experienced a big win (54% versus 31%).

Furthermore, at this early stage of play, the amounts reported to be won tend to be significantly higher for the Problem Players than the Non-Problem Players (≈$542 versus $249).

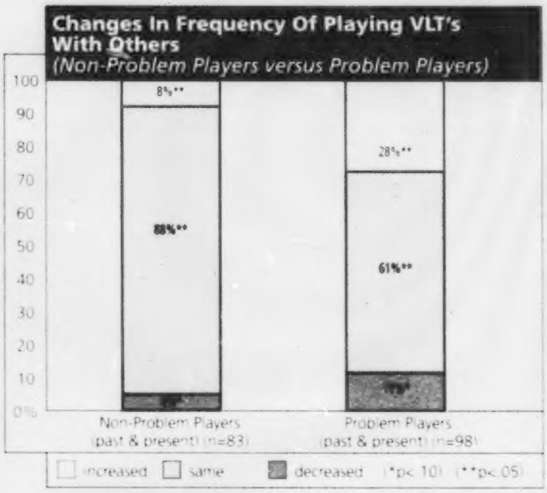
Correlation analysis shows the dollar amount won during the "big win" to be associated with a number of VLT play behaviours, in particular the length of time playing regularly (r=.26), the frequency of play (r=.37), expenditure per session (r=.30) and per spin (r=.34), and the dollar amount considered to be a win (r=.39). While all these correlations are significant, the strength of the association is low to medium, still, the relationships account for upwards of 15% of the variance in these play behaviours. Increased adoption or implementation of these same play behaviours were also found to be risk factors for problem VL play in the 1997/98 Nova Scotia Video Lottery Players' Survey.

Whether players win or lose the first time they played VLT's does not appear to be related to the development of problems. However, experiencing a "big win" during the early stages of play is associated with a number of behaviours linked to problems with video lottery and clearly discriminates the Problem Players from the Non-Problem Players in this study. Given that between 25% and 38% of past or present Problem Players indicate that they were motivated to play more regularly by the chance to win money, a big win early on may reinforce the motivation to not only continue playing but to play with an increased level of intensity. Over half of past and present Problem VL Players indicated that they had personally experienced a big win early in their playing history, yet the Resolved Present Players were more inclined than Past Players to attribute this occurrence to their adoption of regular VL playing patterns (36% versus 17%). This suggests that the problem play of Resolved Present Players, in some cases, may be more likely to have evolved in response to their play experience rather than other underlying conditions or circumstances. The etiology of problem VL gambling for the Resolved Past Players and for many Unresolved Players may be more complex.

CHANGES IN EARLY PLAY BEHAVIOUR

PLAY WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

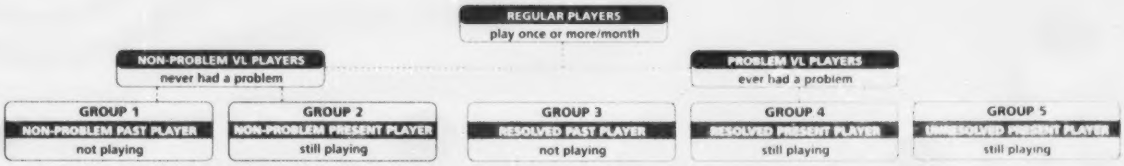
Players were asked about how often they played with other friends or family members when they first started playing VLT's regularly and whether their VL participation with these individuals changed in any way over the course of play. Overall, 43% reported that they rarely or never played with friends or family present, 19% did so occasionally (≈25% to 50% of times played), and 37% did so frequently or almost always (50%+ of times played). There were virtually no differences between the Problem and Non-Problem Player groups in their playing habits with others. However, over time, over three times as many Problem Players reported a change in their play behaviour with others, as compared to Non-Problem Players (39% versus 12%; p<.05). **In fact, 28% of all past and present Problem Players increased the amount of times they played with friends and/or family members on the same or a nearby machine.** It is particularly noteworthy that for only the Resolved Past Players did a similar proportion of players decrease (25%) as increase (21%) their play involvement with others. Interestingly, as will be demonstrated later in the report, Resolved Past Players are the only Problem Player segment likely to have sought out formal or professional treatment and assistance. Thus, the behaviour of these adults is more likely to be seen by service providers and will contribute most strongly to beliefs and perceptions of the clinical field about Problem Players. However, the Resolved Present Players and Unresolved Players are significantly (p<.05) less likely to have reduced their involvement levels (≈7%), with almost one-third (30%) having increased the proportion of time they play with others. **This suggests that VL gambling takes on a much more significant social role over time for approximately one-third of those who continue to engage in on-going play and tends to contradict assumptions that VL problem gambling is always a solitary and/or isolating pursuit.**


Changes In Frequency Of Playing VLT's With Others
(Non-Problem Players versus Problem Players)

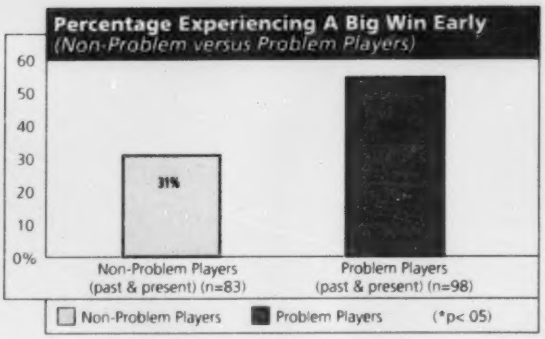
CHANGES IN VL PLAY FREQUENCY, DURATION AND EXPENDITURE

Players were also asked whether the amount of time or money spent playing video lottery increased, decreased or remained the same once they assumed regular VL play patterns. In general, all five of the behaviours related to time and money expenditure (see graph) were more likely to increase or remain the same than decrease. This pattern of behaviour was consistent among all the player segments.

However, those who have ever had a problem with VL gambling were significantly more likely than those who have never had a problem to consistently report increases in


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

EXPERIENCING A BIG WIN EARLY



Overall, 44% of participants had experienced what they considered to be a "big win" when they first started playing VLT's on a regular basis. While the interpretation of a big win varied considerably (the dollar amount ranged from $5 to $2,500), the median dollar amount was $300. Problem Players, past or present, were more likely than Non-Problem Players to have experienced a big win (54% versus 31%).

Furthermore, at this early stage of play, the amounts reported to be won tend to be significantly higher for the Problem Players than the Non-Problem Players (≈$542 versus $249).

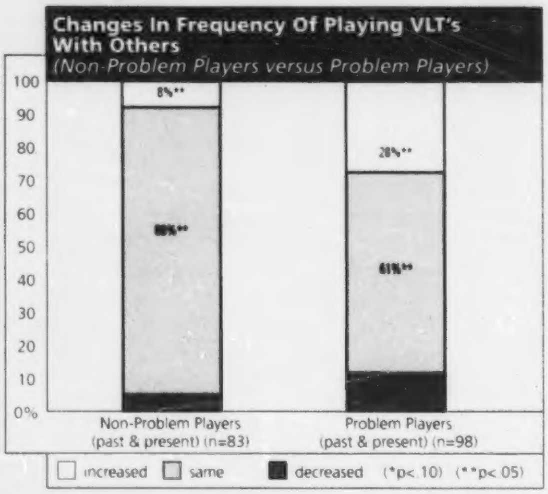
Correlation analysis shows the dollar amount won during the "big win" to be associated with a number of VLT play behaviours, in particular the length of time playing regularly (r=.26), the frequency of play (r=.37), expenditure per session (r=.30) and per spin (r=.34), and the dollar amount considered to be a win (r=.39). While all these correlations are significant, the strength of the association is low to medium, still, the relationships account for upwards of 15% of the variance in these play behaviours. Increased adoption or implementation of these same play behaviours were also found to be risk factors for problem VL play in the 1997/98 Nova Scotia Video Lottery Players' Survey.

Whether players win or lose the first time they played VLT's does not appear to be related to the development of problems. However, experiencing a "big win" during the early stages of play is associated with a number of behaviours linked to problems with video lottery and clearly discriminates the Problem Players from the Non-Problem Players in this study. Given that between 25% and 38% of past or present Problem Players indicate that they were motivated to play more regularly by the chance to win money, a big win early on may reinforce the motivation to not only continue playing but to play with an increased level of intensity. Over half of past and present Problem VL Players indicated that they had personally experienced a big win early in their playing history, yet the Resolved Present Players were more inclined than Past Players to attribute this occurrence to their adoption of regular VL playing patterns (36% versus 17%). This suggests that the problem play of Resolved Present Players, in some cases, may be more likely to have evolved in response to their play experience rather than other underlying conditions or circumstances. The etiology of problem VL gambling for the Resolved Past Players and for many Unresolved Players may be more complex.

CHANGES IN EARLY PLAY BEHAVIOUR

PLAY WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

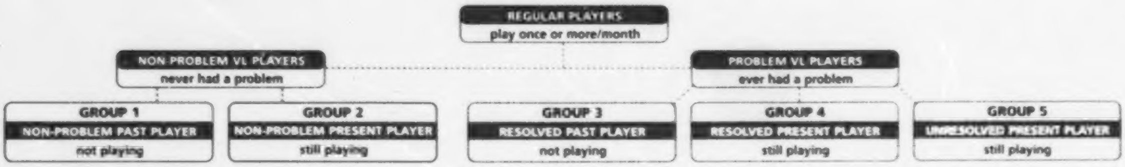
Players were asked about how often they played with other friends or family members when they first started playing VLT's regularly and whether their VL participation with these individuals changed in any way over the course of play. Overall, 43% reported that they rarely or never played with friends or family present, 19% did so occasionally (≈25% to 50% of times played), and 37% did so frequently or almost always (50%+ of times played). There were virtually no differences between the Problem and Non-Problem Player groups in their playing habits with others. However, over time, over three times as many Problem Players reported a change in their play behaviour with others, as compared to Non-Problem Players (39% versus 12%; p<.05). **In fact, 28% of all past and present Problem Players increased the amount of times they played with friends and/or family members on the same or a nearby machine.** It is particularly noteworthy that for only the Resolved Past Players did a similar proportion of players decrease (25%) as increase (21%) their play involvement with others. Interestingly, as will be demonstrated later in the report, Resolved Past Players are the only Problem Player segment likely to have sought out formal or professional treatment and assistance. Thus, the behaviour of these adults is more likely to be seen by service providers and will contribute most strongly to beliefs and perceptions of the clinical field about Problem Players. However, the Resolved Present Players and Unresolved Players are significantly (p<.05) less likely to have reduced their involvement levels (≈7%), with almost one-third (30%) having increased the proportion of time they play with others. **This suggests that VL gambling takes on a much more significant social role over time for approximately one-third of those who continue to engage in on-going play and tends to contradict assumptions that VL problem gambling is always a solitary and/or isolating pursuit.**

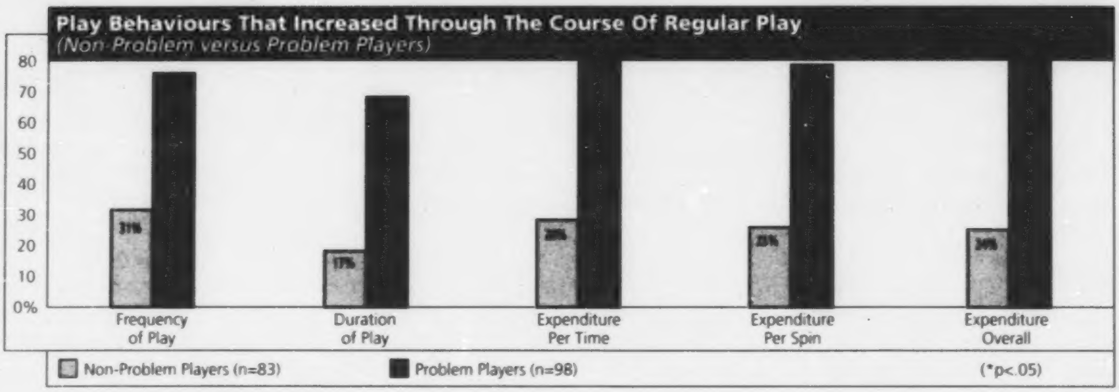

Changes In Frequency Of Playing VLT's With Others
(Non-Problem Players versus Problem Players)

CHANGES IN VL PLAY FREQUENCY, DURATION AND EXPENDITURE

Players were also asked whether the amount of time or money spent playing video lottery increased, decreased or remained the same once they assumed regular VL play patterns. In general, all five of the behaviours related to time and money expenditure (see graph) were more likely to increase or remain the same than decrease. This pattern of behaviour was consistent among all the player segments.

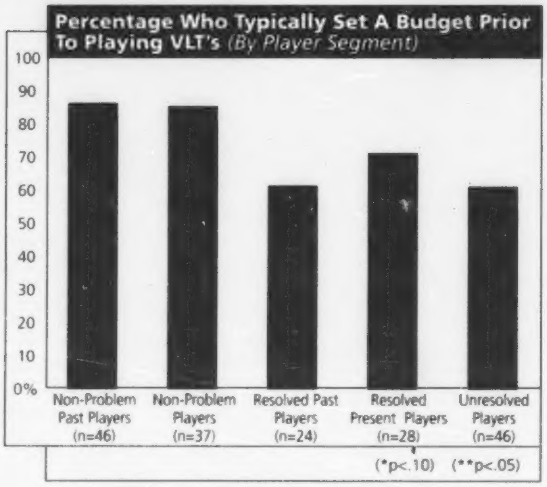
However, those who have ever had a problem with VL gambling were significantly more likely than those who have never had a problem to consistently report increases in


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing



their time/ expenditure related VL play behaviour. Increased expenditure and duration of play are known risk factors for the onset of problem VL play (see 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey). In this regard, the Problem Player segments are clearly differentiated from the Non-Problem Players, although approximately one-quarter to one-third of all Non-Problem Players participating in the study noted increases in their play activity. **This suggests that increased involvement over time with the activity can sometimes be a normal consequence of VL play for almost one-third of Non-Problem Players, but is almost always experienced by those who develop problems with their VL gambling.**

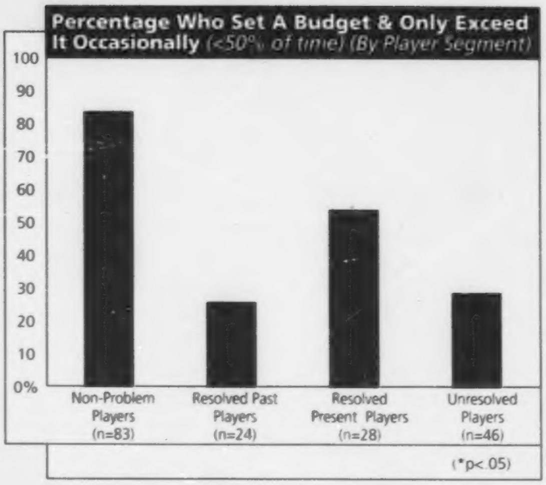
SPENDING LIMITS OR BUDGETS



The use of budgeting strongly discriminates the Non-Problem Player groups from the Problem Player groups, and appears to be one of the critical factors in either preventing or avoiding problem development. In general, nearly all players who have never had a VL problem typically make use of this control strategy (87%), compared with two-thirds (64%) of those who have ever had a problem. Moreover, those who have ever had a problem set a budget per time that is twice as high ($20), based on the median, as those who have never had a problem ($10).

Not only are Problem VL Players less likely to set a budget at all, but those who have set a budget are significantly more likely than their Non-Problem counterparts to report that their budget increased over time (56% versus 14%).

Among those who stated that their budget increased over time (n=45), the amount at least doubled for two-thirds, with one-quarter reporting their budget had tripled. When this is considered only for Problem Players (n=35), over time, approximately 60% have increased their self-imposed spending limits by at least $50.00 each time they play.


Percentage Who Set A Budget & Only Exceed It Occasionally *(<50% of time) (By Player Segment)*

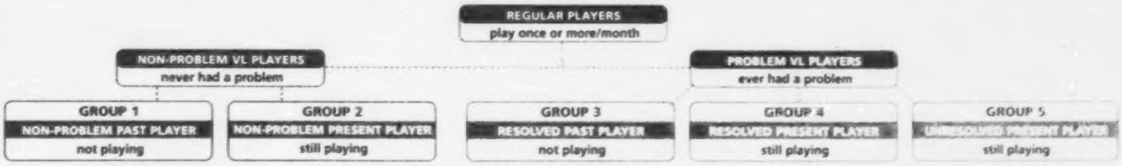
While setting a budget is a critical step in maintaining control over VL play, adhering to a budget appears to be even more important. There are 84% of Non-Problem Players, both past and present, who report that, for the most part, they set a budget for their VL play and never or rarely exceed this self-imposed limit. Conversely, Problem Players, collectively, are significantly less likely to set a budget or to derive any benefit from budgeting if they do attempt to set one.

However, compared to the other Problem Players, twice as many Resolved Present Players (54% versus 25% to 28%; $p<.05$) reported they set and consistently adhered to a budget (at least 50% or more of the times they play). This may be an important determinant in how Resolved Present Players are able to overcome their VL problem and continue playing rather than abstaining. For the Unresolved Players, the majority (72%) either do not set a budget (39%) or will exceed this self-imposed limit half or more of the times they play (38%). This is also true of the Resolved Past Players when they had been playing VLT's.

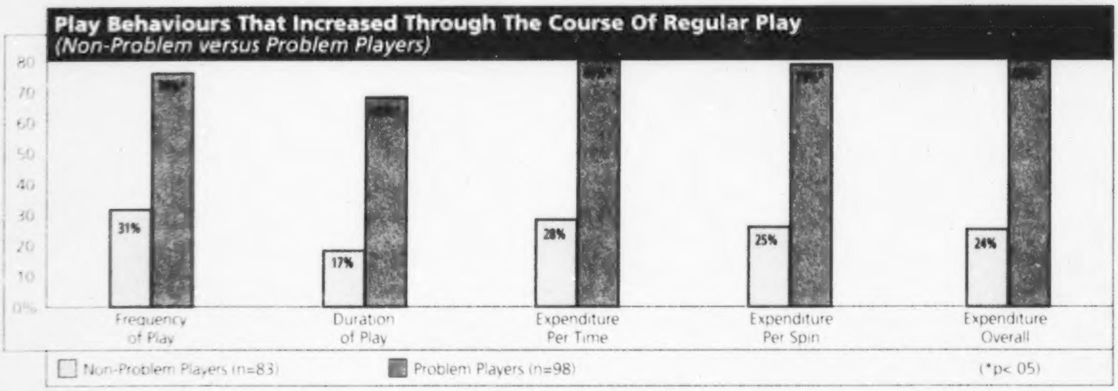
Changes in early play behaviour provide key insight, notwithstanding the contextual reasons why such behaviour persists, into ways in which interacting with the machines can lead to the development of VL problems.

In the current analysis, increased frequency, duration and expenditure on VL were all found to be associated with those who developed problems with their VL play. Problem Players were also less likely to set budgets than the Non-Problem Players and, when they did so, they set them at levels that were twice as high as the Non-Problem Players. More telling of their heightened participation in VL is that Problem Players (Resolved Past Players and Unresolved Players in particular) are much more likely than Non-Problem Players to report that they frequently or almost always exceed their budget, even though they are also more likely to have increased their budgets over time.

While Resolved Present Players are also more likely than Non-Problem Players to have increased their VL time and money expenditures and to have increased and exceeded their budgets, they have not done so to the extent of the other Problem Player groups. Although the differences between the Problem Player groups do not always approach statistical significance, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the Resolved Present Players are better able to moderate their VL behaviour than the Resolved Past Players and the Unresolved Players. This degree of moderation might partly explain why Resolved Present Players were able to successfully resolve their problems and continue playing rather than having to abstain altogether. Undoubtedly, the greater ability of the Resolved Present Players to set and stick to a budget is contributing to their ability to exert control over their play.

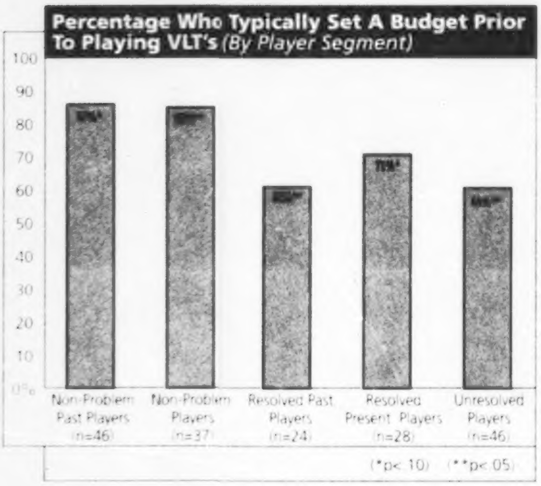


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing


Play Behaviours That Increased Through The Course Of Regular Play
(Non-Problem versus Problem Players)

their time/ expenditure related VL play behaviour. Increased expenditure and duration of play are known risk factors for the onset of problem VL play (see 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey). In this regard, the Problem Player segments are clearly differentiated from the Non-Problem Players, although approximately one-quarter to one-third of all Non-Problem Players participating in the study noted increases in their play activity. **This suggests that increased involvement over time with the activity can sometimes be a normal consequence of VL play for almost one-third of Non-Problem Players, but is almost always experienced by those who develop problems with their VL gambling.**

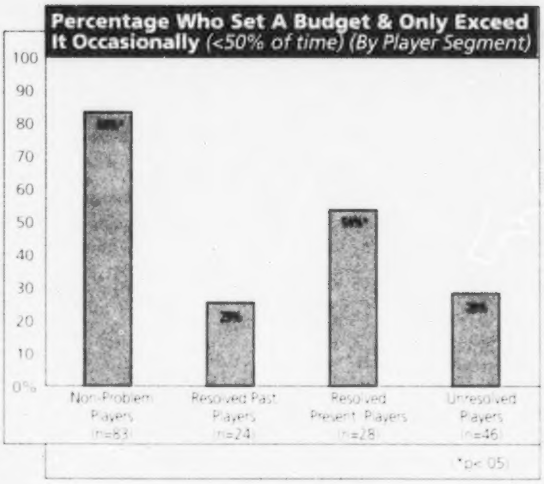
SPENDING LIMITS OR BUDGETS


Percentage Who Typically Set A Budget Prior To Playing VLT's *(By Player Segment)*

The use of budgeting strongly discriminates the Non-Problem Player groups from the Problem Player groups, and appears to be one of the critical factors in either preventing or avoiding problem development. In general, nearly all players who have never had a VL problem typically make use of this control strategy (87%), compared with two-thirds (64%) of those who have ever had a problem. Moreover, those who have ever had a problem set a budget per time that is twice as high ($20), based on the median, as those who have never had a problem ($10).

Not only are Problem VL Players less likely to set a budget at all, but those who have set a budget are significantly more likely than their Non-Problem counterparts to report that their budget increased over time (56% versus 14%).

Among those who stated that their budget increased over time (n=45), the amount at least doubled for two-thirds, with one-quarter reporting their budget had tripled. When this is considered only for Problem Players (n=35), over time, approximately 60% have increased their self-imposed spending limits by at least $50.00 each time they play.



Percentage Who Set A Budget & Only Exceed It Occasionally *(<50% of time) (By Player Segment)*

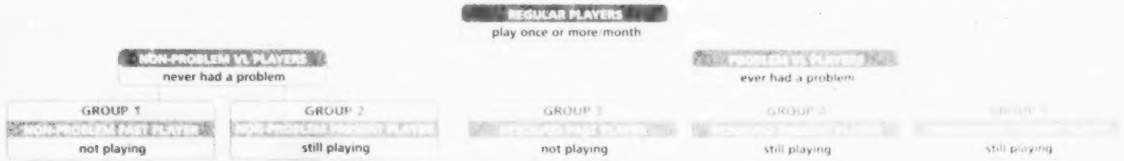
While setting a budget is a critical step in maintaining control over VL play, adhering to a budget appears to be even more important. There are 84% of Non-Problem Players, both past and present, who report that, for the most part, they set a budget for their VL play and never or rarely exceed this self-imposed limit. Conversely, Problem Players, collectively, are significantly less likely to set a budget or to derive any benefit from budgeting if they do attempt to set one.

However, compared to the other Problem Players, twice as many Resolved Present Players (54% versus 25% to 28%; p<.05) reported they set and consistently adhered to a budget (at least 50% or more of the times they play). This may be an important determinant in how Resolved Present Players are able to overcome their VL problem and continue playing rather than abstaining. For the Unresolved Players, the majority (72%) either do not set a budget (39%) or will exceed this self-imposed limit half or more of the times they play (38%). This is also true of the Resolved Past Players when they had been playing VLT's.

Changes in early play behaviour provide key insight, notwithstanding the contextual reasons why such behaviour persists, into ways in which interacting with the machines can lead to the development of VL problems.

In the current analysis, increased frequency, duration and expenditure on VL were all found to be associated with those who developed problems with their VL play. Problem Players were also less likely to set budgets than the Non-Problem Players and, when they did so, they set them at levels that were twice as high as the Non-Problem Players. More telling of their heightened participation in VL is that Problem Players (Resolved Past Players and Unresolved Players in particular) are much more likely than Non-Problem Players to report that they frequently or almost always exceed their budget, even though they are also more likely to have increased their budgets over time.

While Resolved Present Players are also more likely than Non-Problem Players to have increased their VL time and money expenditures and to have increased and exceeded their budgets, they have not done so to the extent of the other Problem Player groups. Although the differences between the Problem Player groups do not always approach statistical significance, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the Resolved Present Players are better able to moderate their VL behaviour than the Resolved Past Players and the Unresolved Players. This degree of moderation might partly explain why Resolved Present Players were able to successfully resolve their problems and continue playing rather than having to abstain altogether. Undoubtedly, the greater ability of the Resolved Present Players to set and stick to a budget is contributing to their ability to exert control over their play.



THE ONSET OF VIDEO LOTTERY PROBLEMS

The following sections examine only those players who have ever had a problem with video lottery, and discusses key differences among the three groups of Problem Players - Resolved Past Players, Resolved Present Players and Unresolved Players.

Those players who have ever had difficulties with their video lottery play were asked about the progression of their VL problem and the situational factors leading up to problem play. Problem play progression was examined through two questions regarding the suddenness of problem development, while the situational factors included a range of significant life events (e.g., loss of a spouse, loss of a job) and psychological moods/disorders (e.g., depression, loneliness, boredom).

SUDDENNESS OF PROBLEM ONSET

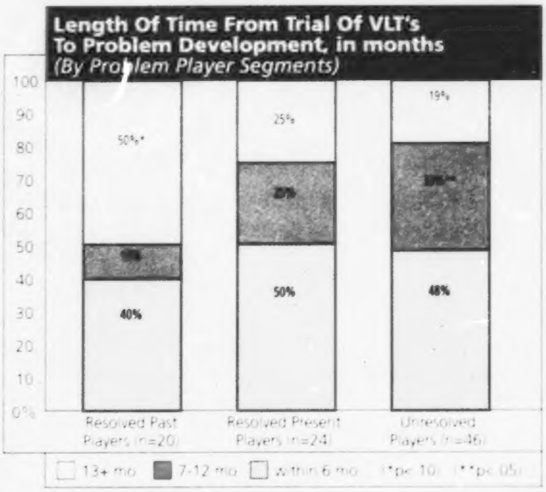
With regards to the onset of problem play, three-quarters of those who have ever had a problem (75%) felt that their VL problem happened gradually, whereas one-quarter (25%) described it as a sudden change.

More revealing of the progression of problem VLT play is that **almost half (47%) indicated that their problem began within 6 months of first trying VLT's,** while for another quarter (26%), problems began within the first year. Seven and a-half months was the median length of time from trial of VLT's to the onset of problems. Among those who experienced a sudden change, the average length of time from trial of VLT's to the development of problems was 5 1/2 months, whereas it was 17 1/2 months for those experiencing a gradual change.

While Resolved Past Players were just as likely to report that their problem with video lottery occurred suddenly (35%) as the Resolved Present Players (20%) and Unresolved Players (22%), fewer Resolved Past Players stated that their problem began within a year of trying VLT's than the other Problem Players (50% versus ≈80%; p<.05).

In fact, half of those Problem Players who have stopped playing VLT's altogether (Resolved Past Players) indicated that their problems with VL gambling occurred more than twelve months after they had first tried the games. In contrast, the majority of Resolved Present Players (75%) and Unresolved Players (81%) who are still engaged in the activity reported that they developed problems within the first year after trial and, in most cases, within six months of having tried the machines (≈50%). Thus, for the Resolved Past Players, it appears that the development of problem play was more gradual.

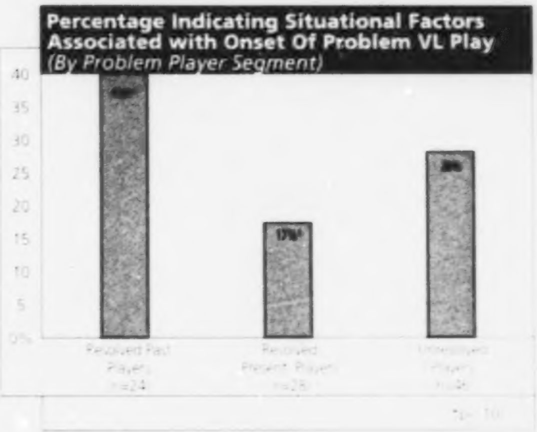
Length Of Time From Trial Of VLT's To Problem Development, in months
(By Problem Player Segments)



Note: There were four Resolved Past Players and four Resolved Present Players who indicated that they were unsure as to the onset of problem development. For comparative purposes, these individuals were excluded from the analysis.

SITUATIONAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ONSET OF VIDEO LOTTERY PROBLEMS

All past and present Problem Players were asked if there was anything in particular or different going on in their lives at the time they started developing problems with the time or money they spent on video lottery. Although all respondents were specifically probed on such issues as job loss or changes, relationship problems, financial or money problems, changes in marital status and other mood states including depression, loneliness or boredom, the majority of Problem Players (71%) indicated there was nothing unusual happening in their lives.



Percentage Indicating Situational Factors Associated with Onset Of Problem VL Play
(By Problem Player Segment)

Resolved Past Players are more inclined to cite situational factors and/or changes as coinciding with the onset of their VL problems than are Resolved Present Players (40% versus 17%, p<.10). At the very least, this suggests that Resolved Past Players are more likely to view their VL problem as being either directly associated with or in response to other (external) events or factors. Conversely, the Resolved Present Players are less likely to attribute the onset of VL problems to specific events or circumstances outside of VL play. The Unresolved Players who are still engaged in some level of problem VL gambling tend to fall midway between these other two groups, with 28% noting an association between the start of their problems with VL play and other changes or situations occurring in their lives.

Regardless, **the majority of those in each Problem Player segment (60%+) state there was nothing particularly significant or unusual precipitating their problem VL gambling.**

"I really didn't have an excuse." (Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

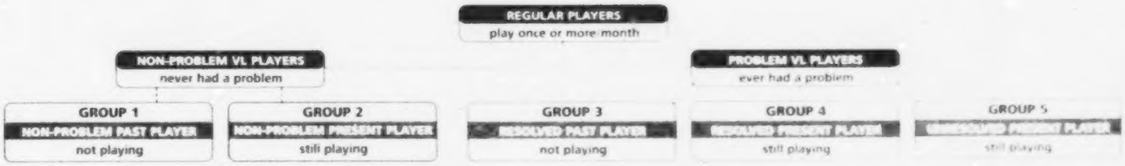
"Nothing. I just became hooked right away." (Male, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Nothing. I take responsibility for my VLT play. There are no specific reasons other than I wanted to play." (Male, 58 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I just liked to play for the entertainment, nothing really."
(Female, 32 years, Unresolved Player)

"Nothing whatsoever." (Male, 52 years, Unresolved Player)

"No, nothing, we just enjoyed playing." (Female, 50 years, Unresolved Player)



REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

THE ONSET OF VIDEO LOTTERY PROBLEMS

The following sections examine only those players who have ever had a problem with video lottery, and discusses key differences among the three groups of Problem Players - Resolved Past Players, Resolved Present Players and Unresolved Players.

Those players who have ever had difficulties with their video lottery play were asked about the progression of their VL problem and the situational factors leading up to problem play. Problem play progression was examined through two questions regarding the suddenness of problem development, while the situational factors included a range of significant life events (e.g., loss of a spouse, loss of a job) and psychological moods/disorders (e.g., depression, loneliness, boredom).

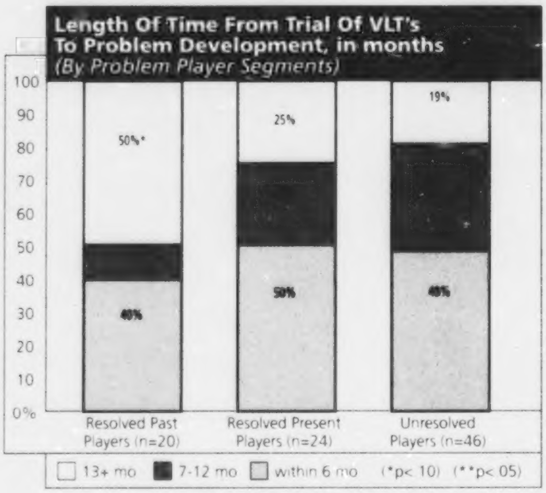
SUDDENNESS OF PROBLEM ONSET

With regards to the onset of problem play, three-quarters of those who have ever had a problem (75%) felt that their VL problem happened gradually, whereas one-quarter (25%) described it as a sudden change.

More revealing of the progression of problem VLT play is that **almost half (47%) indicated that their problem began within 6 months of first trying VLT's,** while for another quarter (26%), problems began within the first year. Seven and a-half months was the median length of time from trial of VLT's to the onset of problems. Among those who experienced a sudden change, the average length of time from trial of VLT's to the development of problems was 5 1/2 months, whereas it was 17 1/2 months for those experiencing a gradual change.

While Resolved Past Players were just as likely to report that their problem with video lottery occurred suddenly (35%) as the Resolved Present Players (20%) and Unresolved Players (22%), fewer Resolved Past Players stated that their problem began within a year of trying VLT's than the other Problem Players (50% versus ≈80%; p<.05).

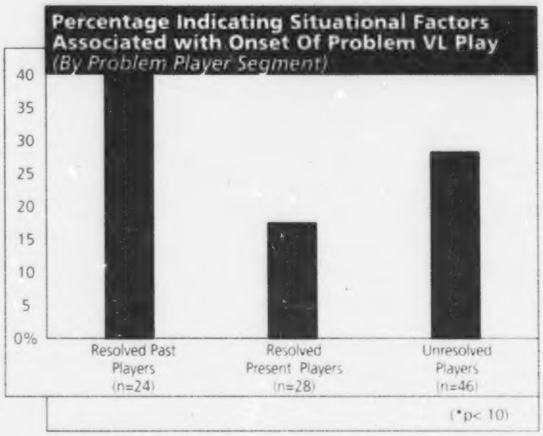
In fact, half of those Problem Players who have stopped playing VLT's altogether (Resolved Past Players) indicated that their problems with VL gambling occurred more than twelve months after they had first tried the games. In contrast, the majority of Resolved Present Players (75%) and Unresolved Players (81%) who are still engaged in the activity reported that they developed problems within the first year after trial and, in most cases, within six months of having tried the machines (≈50%). Thus, for the Resolved Past Players, it appears that the development of problem play was more gradual.



Length Of Time From Trial Of VLT's To Problem Development, in months
(By Problem Player Segments)

Note. There were four Resolved Past Players and four Resolved Present Players who indicated that they were unsure as to the onset of problem development. For comparative purposes, these individuals were excluded from the analysis.

SITUATIONAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ONSET OF VIDEO LOTTERY PROBLEMS



Percentage Indicating Situational Factors Associated with Onset Of Problem VL Play
(By Problem Player Segment)

All past and present Problem Players were asked if there was anything in particular or different going on in their lives at the time they started developing problems with the time or money they spent on video lottery. Although all respondents were specifically probed on such issues as job loss or changes, relationship problems, financial or money problems, changes in marital status and other mood states including depression, loneliness or boredom, the majority of Problem Players (71%) indicated there was nothing unusual happening in their lives.

Resolved Past Players are more inclined to cite situational factors and/or changes as coinciding with the onset of their VL problems than are Resolved Present Players (40% versus 17%, p<.10). At the very least, this suggests that Resolved Past Players are more likely to view their VL problem as being either directly associated with or in response to other (external) events or factors. Conversely, the Resolved Present Players are less likely to attribute the onset of VL problems to specific events or circumstances outside of VL play. The Unresolved Players who are still engaged in some level of problem VL gambling tend to fall midway between these other two groups, with 28% noting an association between the start of their problems with VL play and other changes or situations occurring in their lives.

Regardless, **the majority of those in each Problem Player segment (60%+) state there was nothing particularly significant or unusual precipitating their problem VL gambling.**

"I really didn't have an excuse." (Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

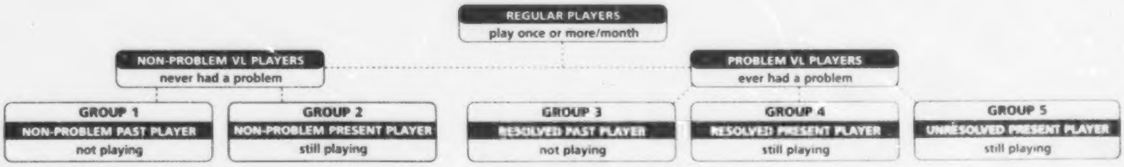
"Nothing. I just became hooked right away." (Male, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Nothing. I take responsibility for my VLT play. There are no specific reasons other than I wanted to play." (Male, 58 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I just liked to play for the entertainment, nothing really."
(Female, 32 years, Unresolved Player)

"Nothing whatsoever." (Male, 52 years, Unresolved Player)

"No, nothing, we just enjoyed playing." (Female, 50 years, Unresolved Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

Of the situational factors mentioned, problems with a spouse or partner, including **divorce or separation** (16%), **financial problems** (7%), loneliness (7%), and **job changes** (7%), were the most common events noted as occurring at the time of problem development. There was a great deal of similarity in responses among the three Problem Player segments. However, Resolved Past Players differed significantly from the Resolved Present Players in their greater tendency to cite the mitigating role of problems with a spouse or partner (20% versus 4%) and loneliness, depression or boredom (17% versus 0%). Again, Unresolved Players did not differ significantly from either of the two Resolved Player groups.

"Got separated and I was depressed." (Male, 29 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Children left home and I was lonely and bored."
(Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I was going through a divorce and having problems with my husband."
(Female, 41 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Personal problems and I was also depressed." (Male, 43 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Nothing, it seems, except problems with my other half."
(Male, 49 years, Resolved Present Player)

"Money problems--lack of work and no money, we thought we could make money playing [VLT's]." (Female, 55 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I lost my job, not due to VLT's, and tried to compensate by winning off the machines." (Male, 34 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I didn't have enough money to get by and tried to compensate by playing VLT's and trying to win." (Male, 31 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I was forced into early retirement from the plant because it closed down so we lost our jobs." (Female, 64 years, Unresolved Player)

"I was in a bad relationship." (Female, 37 years, Unresolved Player)

"Less hours at work, very stressful." (Male, 53 years, Unresolved Player)

"Break-up four years ago. I was upset, angry and hurt at the time and loneliness played a part in it too." (Female, 28 years, Unresolved Player)

Problem Players (past and present) are more likely to report that their problems with VL gambling occurred gradually rather than occurring as a sudden change. However, problems do appear to have developed fairly quickly following the adoption of regular playing patterns. Nearly three-quarters began having problems with video lottery within a year of trying VLT's. Fewer Resolved Past Players began experiencing problems within a year than the other two Problem Player groups, suggesting that their problem play was perceived as more gradual and was more often associated with outside or intervening circumstances.

Most Problem Players cannot recall any unusual situational factors that were happening at the time that problems began. However, almost one-third indicate that their VL problems coincided with the occurrence of other negative life circumstances or changes. For the most part, there are few significant differences in the events believed to precipitate problem VL play among the Problem Player groups. Resolved Present Players are less inclined to attribute the onset of their difficulties with video lottery to events outside their actual play behaviour, whereas Resolved Past Players more often associate their problem VL gambling with relationship problems or depression, loneliness and boredom.

While it is plausible that these situational factors precipitated VL problems, it is equally possible that chronic VL play was contributing to the problems to some extent. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine the direction of such causality. Likewise, while situational changes did not necessarily precede the sudden development of problem VL gambling for the majority of players, it is not possible to rule out the role of pre-existing negative circumstances in contributing to problem play. For example, financial stress, relationship problems, etc., may have already been established for some players prior to their trial of VLT's. Regardless, identifying the association of circumstances or life changes with subsequent problem VL gambling will offer treatment providers substantial insight as to the role of VL gambling for the individual, and assist in determining if problem gambling is a cause or a symptom of other problems in the individual's life.

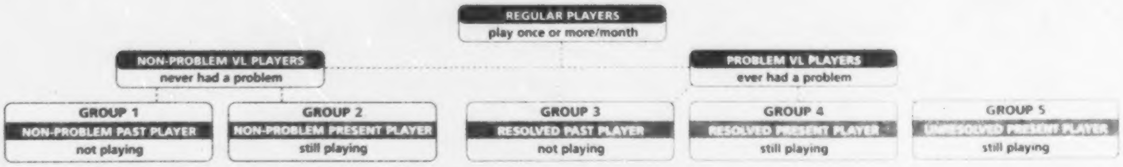
PLAY BEHAVIOUR AT THE TIME VIDEO LOTTERY PROBLEMS BEGAN

TIME AND MONEY EXPENDITURE ON VIDEO LOTTERY

All Problem Players were asked about several aspects of video lottery play behaviour at the time that problems had ensued. More specifically, they were asked about their frequency and duration of play, expenditure per time and spin, the amount considered to be a win, and the frequency of cashing out and continuing to play with winnings. In addition, this information was also obtained from the Non-Problem Players for comparison.

Based on the median at the time problems began, Problem Players in the study were generally playing VLT's approximately twelve times per month, two hours at a time, spending $0.80 per spin and $40 per time. On average, $100 was considered to be a win at which point two-thirds (68%) would frequently or almost always cash out and continue to play with their winnings. There were no notable differences among the three Problem Player segments on any of these measures.

Moreover, no differences were found among the three Problem Player groups in the



Problem Players (past and present) are more likely to report that their problems with VL gambling occurred gradually rather than occurring as a sudden change. However, problems do appear to have developed fairly quickly following the adoption of regular playing patterns. Nearly three-quarters began having problems with video lottery within a year of trying VLT's. Fewer Resolved Past Players began experiencing problems within a year than the other two Problem Player groups, suggesting that their problem play was perceived as more gradual and was more often associated with outside or intervening circumstances.

Most Problem Players cannot recall any unusual situational factors that were happening at the time that problems began. However, almost one-third indicate that their VL problems coincided with the occurrence of other negative life circumstances or changes. For the most part, there are few significant differences in the events believed to precipitate problem VL play among the Problem Player groups. Resolved Present Players are less inclined to attribute the onset of their difficulties with video lottery to events outside their actual play behaviour, whereas Resolved Past Players more often associate their problem VL gambling with relationship problems or depression, loneliness and boredom.

While it is plausible that these situational factors precipitated VL problems, it is equally possible that chronic VL play was contributing to the problems to some extent. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine the direction of such causality. Likewise, while situational changes did not necessarily precede the sudden development of problem VL gambling for the majority of players, it is not possible to rule out the role of pre-existing negative circumstances in contributing to problem play. For example, financial stress, relationship problems, etc., may have already been established for some players prior to their trial of VLT's. Regardless, identifying the association of circumstances or life changes with subsequent problem VL gambling will offer treatment providers substantial insight as to the role of VL gambling for the individual, and assist in determining if problem gambling is a cause or a symptom of other problems in the individual's life.

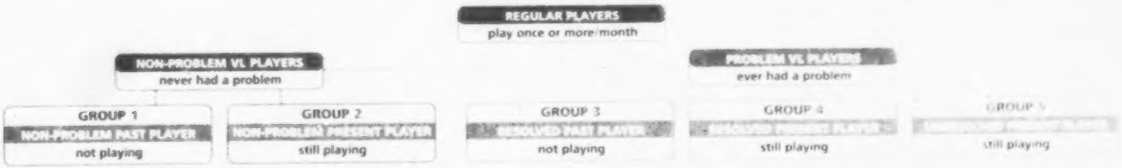
PLAY BEHAVIOUR AT THE TIME VIDEO LOTTERY PROBLEMS BEGAN

TIME AND MONEY EXPENDITURE ON VIDEO LOTTERY

All Problem Players were asked about several aspects of video lottery play behaviour at the time that problems had ensued. More specifically, they were asked about their frequency and duration of play, expenditure per time and spin, the amount considered to be a win, and the frequency of cashing out and continuing to play with winnings. In addition, this information was also obtained from the Non-Problem Players for comparison.

Based on the median at the time problems began, Problem Players in the study were generally playing VLT's approximately twelve times per month, two hours at a time, spending $0.80 per spin and $40 per time. On average, $100 was considered to be a win at which point two-thirds (68%) would frequently or almost always cash out and continue to play with their winnings. There were no notable differences among the three Problem Player segments on any of these measures.

Moreover, no differences were found among the three Problem Player groups in the



amount considered to be a win or in cashing out behaviour once the "win" was reached. In fact, the amount considered a win is not related to how frequently players cash out. In other words, a player who considers $20 dollars to be a win is just as likely to cash out when they reach this point and play with their winnings as a player who considers $200 to be a win.

Given that there were no significant differences among the three Problem Player segments in terms of time or money expenditures on VLT's at the time of their problem VL play, a general comparison between the Non-Problem Past Players (n=46) and Problem Player groups was undertaken.

NOTE: Non-Problem Present Players were excluded from the comparison, as they were only questioned for their current playing patterns rather than specifically when they were involved in regular play.

TIME & MONEY EXPENDITURES (NON-PROBLEM VERSUS PROBLEM PLAYERS)

	Non-Problem Past Players (n=46)	Problem Players (n=98)
Number of Times Played Per Month		
Average Median	5.1 times 4.0 times	14.2 times 12.0 times
Length of Time Played Each Session (minutes)		
Average Median	31.6 min. 20.0 min	138.7 min 120.0 min
Derived Monthly Expenditure (out-of-pocket per time expenditure By# of times played per month)		
Average Median	$80.26 $27.50	$1,207.21 $490.00

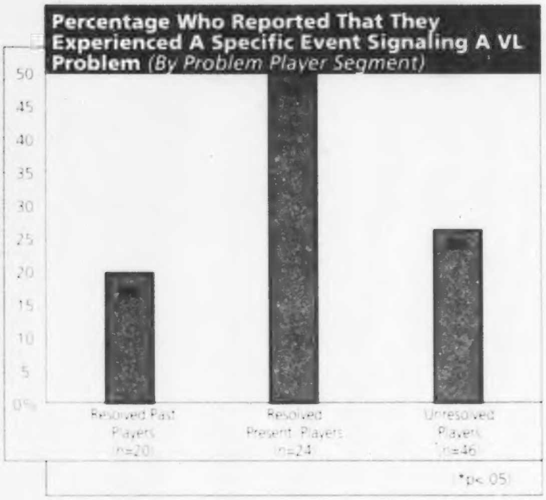
Consistent with results obtained in the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, those individuals involved in self-declared problem VL gambling are significantly more likely than self-declared Non-Problem Players to be playing more often (median: 12 versus 4 times/month), for longer periods of time (median: 2 hours versus 20 minutes), and spending at considerably higher levels (median: $490.00 versus $27.50)

The dollar amount considered to be a win ranged from a low of $10 to a high of $500. Players who consider comparatively large amounts to be a win (e.g., $101 to $500) are cashing out as often as those who consider $10 to $50 to be a win, yet the majority do not stop playing and instead continue to play with their winnings. Obviously, having set the acceptable win standard so high, many players will never reach this level and will frequently or almost always play until all of their money is spent. It may be that lowering players' expectations of win amounts or encouraging the adoption of lower cashout standards offers potential for harm minimization, especially if players can then be encouraged to stop rather than continue playing with the winnings.

All Problem Player groups reported similar frequency and duration of play at the time their VL problems occurred. On average, players in any of the three Problem Player segments were spending approximately 24

to 28 hours per month playing VLT's when they experienced their VL gambling problems, as compared to only approximately 2 hours per month by the Non-Problem Players when they were involved in regular play. It is particularly compelling that there were no appreciable differences observed in time or money expenditures among the three Problem Player segments. This suggests that, independent of current problem status (e.g., Resolved versus Unresolved), those who reported ever having difficulties with their VL gambling all exhibited similar playing patterns at the time they were experiencing their VL problems.

PROBLEM RECOGNITION

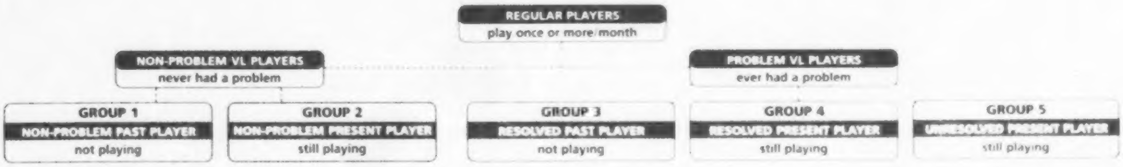


Percentage Who Reported That They Experienced A Specific Event Signaling A VL Problem *(By Problem Player Segment)*

Problem Players were also asked whether there was a specific event or moment that occurred in their life when they recognized and admitted that they had a problem with video lottery. While one third (31%) reported that there was a specific event or "moment-of-truth" precipitating problem recognition or admission, two-thirds (69%) indicated that it was a gradual process. Resolved Present Players were more likely than the other Problem Player groups to report the incidence of a specific event (50% versus ≈24%).

Among those Problem Players who experienced a specific event (n=26), 42% identified **financial problems** as a precipitating factor, followed by the realization that **time and/or money were being wasted** (31%), **mental health problems** (23%) and **relationship problems** (19%). Among those who described the process as gradual (n=62) there are some noteworthy similarities. Within this group, sizable proportions also mentioned financial problems (47%) and the realization that time and/or money were being wasted (45%) as catalysts. Relationship problems and a sense of diminishing self-control over VL play were also issues for about 10%.

The Problem Player groups were remarkably similar in the events that led them to believe they had a problem. Unresolved Players, however, were more likely than Resolved Present Players to specifically mention that they were having significant financial problems. For Resolved Present Players, the financial impact of play was more often referred to as a "waste of money" rather than having reached the more drastic levels of financial problems.



REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

amount considered to be a win or in cashing out behaviour once the "win" was reached. In fact, the amount considered a win is not related to how frequently players cash out. In other words, a player who considers $20 dollars to be a win is just as likely to cash out when they reach this point and play with their winnings as a player who considers $200 to be a win.

Given that there were no significant differences among the three Problem Player segments in terms of time or money expenditures on VLT's at the time of their problem VL play, a general comparison between the Non-Problem Past Players (n=46) and Problem Player groups was undertaken.

NOTE: Non-Problem Present Players were excluded from the comparison, as they were only questioned for their current playing patterns rather than specifically when they were involved in regular play.

TIME & MONEY EXPENDITURES (NON-PROBLEM VERSUS PROBLEM PLAYERS)

	Non-Problem Past Players (n=46)	Problem Players (n=98)
Number of Times Played Per Month		
Average Median	5.1 times 4.0 times	14.2 times 12.0 times
Length of Time Played Each Session (minutes)		
Average Median	31.6 min. 20.0 min	138.7 min 120.0 min
Derived Monthly Expenditure (out-of-pocket per time expenditure By# of times played per month)		
Average Median	$80.26 $27.50	$1,207.21 $490.00

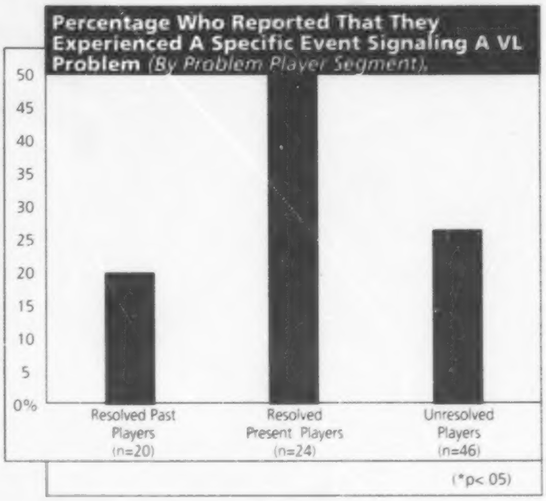
Consistent with results obtained in the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, those individuals involved in self-declared problem VL gambling are significantly more likely than self-declared Non-Problem Players to be playing more often (median: 12 versus 4 times/month), for longer periods of time (median: 2 hours versus 20 minutes), and spending at considerably higher levels (median: $490.00 versus $27.50)

The dollar amount considered to be a win ranged from a low of $10 to a high of $500. Players who consider comparatively large amounts to be a win (e.g., $101 to $500) are cashing out as often as those who consider $10 to $50 to be a win, yet the majority do not stop playing and instead continue to play with their winnings. Obviously, having set the acceptable win standard so high, many players will never reach this level and will frequently or almost always play until all of their money is spent. It may be that lowering players' expectations of win amounts or encouraging the adoption of lower cashout standards offers potential for harm minimization, especially if players can then be encouraged to stop rather than continue playing with the winnings.

All Problem Player groups reported similar frequency and duration of play at the time their VL problems occurred. On average, players in any of the three Problem Player segments were spending approximately 24

to 28 hours per month playing VLT's when they experienced their VL gambling problems, as compared to only approximately 2 hours per month by the Non-Problem Players when they were involved in regular play. It is particularly compelling that there were no appreciable differences observed in time or money expenditures among the three Problem Player segments. This suggests that, independent of current problem status (e.g., Resolved versus Unresolved), those who reported ever having difficulties with their VL gambling all exhibited similar playing patterns at the time they were experiencing their VL problems.

PROBLEM RECOGNITION

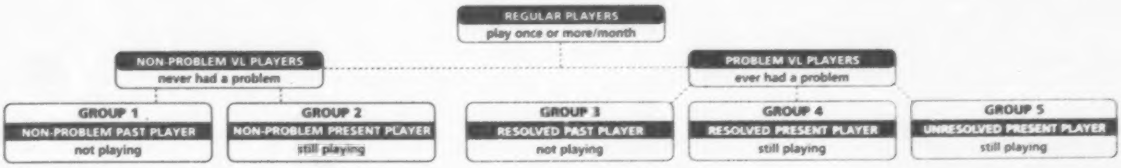


Percentage Who Reported That They Experienced A Specific Event Signaling A VL Problem *(By Problem Player Segment)*

Problem Players were also asked whether there was a specific event or moment that occurred in their life when they recognized and admitted that they had a problem with video lottery. While one third (31%) reported that there was a specific event or "moment-of-truth" precipitating problem recognition or admission, two-thirds (69%) indicated that it was a gradual process. Resolved Present Players were more likely than the other Problem Player groups to report the incidence of a specific event (50% versus ≈24%).

Among those Problem Players who experienced a specific event (n=26), 42% identified **financial problems** as a precipitating factor, followed by the realization that **time and/or money were being wasted** (31%), **mental health problems** (23%) and **relationship problems** (19%). Among those who described the process as gradual (n=62) there are some noteworthy similarities. Within this group, sizable proportions also mentioned financial problems (47%) and the realization that time and/or money were being wasted (45%) as catalysts. Relationship problems and a sense of diminishing self-control over VL play were also issues for about 10%.

The Problem Player groups were remarkably similar in the events that led them to believe they had a problem. Unresolved Players, however, were more likely than Resolved Present Players to specifically mention that they were having significant financial problems. For Resolved Present Players, the financial impact of play was more often referred to as a "waste of money" rather than having reached the more drastic levels of financial problems.



REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

"Realized I was playing more often and spending more money and not winning anything. It was a reality check." (Male, 53 Years, Resolved Present Player)

"I just realized that I was going too often and I was spending too much money and that it was a problem." (Female, 39 Years, Resolved Present Player)

"Well, I lost all my money and had to re-mortgage my home to pay bills and I'm in debt again and will have to do it again soon." (Female, 64 Years, Unresolved Player)

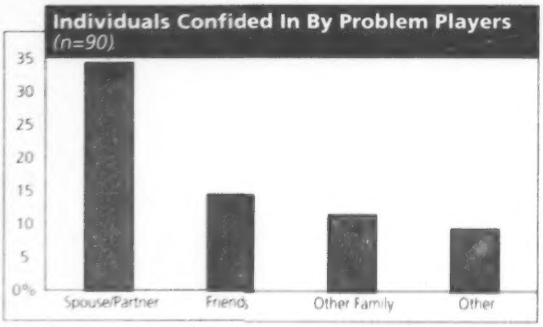
"My financial problems were getting worse. I spent all of my bill money and was borrowing on top of that and getting money illegally too."
(Female, 40 Years, Unresolved Player)

"Because I would get upset when I didn't win. I would get more money through other means to try and win my money back over and over again, and it was like that all the time. I got money through ways I never thought I would and I knew I was in trouble." (Female, 41 Years, Resolved Past Player)

"I started arguing with my girlfriend about where I was for five hours. It got to the point where I physically had to go, even if I didn't have the money to play, I had to go down to look at them." (Male, 52 Years, Unresolved Player)

"I gradually noticed I started to take more money to go play. I'd play longer, I didn't want my wife to know I was playing so I'd go play when she wouldn't be around to know about it. It took me a long time to admit that I had a problem."
(Male, 40 Years, Resolved Past Player)

ADMISSION OF A PROBLEM



Individuals Confided In By Problem Players
(n=90)

Problem Players were also asked about their admission of a VL problem to others. Two-thirds (64%) reported having confided in someone, whereas one-third (36%) had not. Players in each Problem Player group were equally likely to have discussed their problem with someone else, primarily a family member.

Over half (53%) of those who admitted to a problem told their spouse or partner, representing one-third (34%) of all Problem Players. Resolved Present Players are twice as likely to have admitted their difficulties to a spouse/partner than Resolved Past Players (50% versus 25%; p<.10), suggesting that spousal support may be a significant factor in players' ability to continue playing VLT's, but maintain control after experiencing problems.

Approximately 13% of all Problem Players confided their problem play to a friend, and a similar proportion talked to another family member (child, sibling, parent). Nine percent report telling another source, including GA (2%) and/or a health professional (2%).

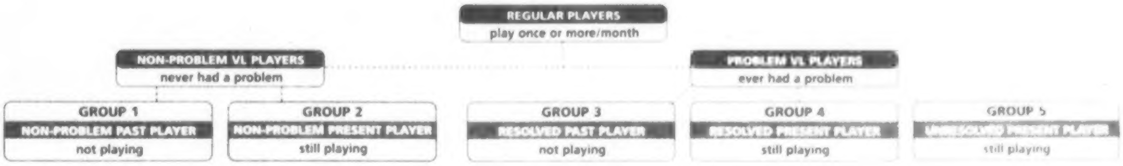
Most Problem Players are not triggered by a specific event into realizing a problem exists. However, Resolved Present Players are almost twice as likely to recall a specific moment when they recognized a problem with their video lottery play. It may be that such a "moment of truth" or the self-realization of a problem following an isolated event assists the player in moderating or exerting control over their behaviour. Whether problems are recognized gradually or through a specific event, financial problems and a sense that time and money is being wasted are the two primary "eye openers." Most Problem Players confide in someone once they realize a problem exists, primarily a spouse or partner. This is especially true of the Resolved Present Players. To a lesser extent, other family and friends are also confided in. It appears that formal sources of help are not used when the Problem Player first wishes to talk about their problem. Thus, at this point, it will often fall upon the spouse, family or friends to seek out additional information and/or assistance in attempts to help the Problem VL Gambler. Ensuring the information is available with initial assistance aimed at targeting or supporting family members or friends will greatly enhance dissemination of the information and subsequent action undertaken.

STOPPING OR REDUCING VLT PLAY

Only Non-Problem Players and those Problem Players who have either successfully stopped or reduced their VL play were questioned as to the factors influencing this behaviour. While several situational factors appear to have an important role in play reduction or cessation, having made a conscious decision to stop or reduce play has twice the effect. **This signifies the importance of internal over external control factors in how Problem Players first come to stop or reduce their play.**

There are few notable differences among Non-Problem or Problem Players in the situations leading to play reductions. The only exception is that **Problem Players were almost twice as likely to make a conscious decision to stop playing than Non-Problem Players,** suggesting that quitting or cutting back requires more of a deliberate commitment for the Problem Players. While this result is not particularly surprising, what may be somewhat unexpected is that almost half (45%) of the Non-Problem Players also noted making a conscious decision to stop or reduce play. This suggests that even for those who have not developed significant difficulties with their VL play, the reduction of the activity merits deliberate consideration. **Thus, reductions of play and/or stopping by Non-Problem Players are also strategies for controlling behaviour, and potentially avoiding problem development.**

Taking up other or new interests and having the imposition of restricted machine access (i.e., relocation from the corner stores into licensed establishments) were also important in motivating players in general to stop or



"Realized I was playing more often and spending more money and not winning anything. It was a reality check." (Male, 53 Years, Resolved Present Player)

"I just realized that I was going too often and I was spending too much money and that it was a problem." (Female, 39 Years, Resolved Present Player)

"Well, I lost all my money and had to re-mortgage my home to pay bills and I'm in debt again and will have to do it again soon." (Female, 64 Years, Unresolved Player)

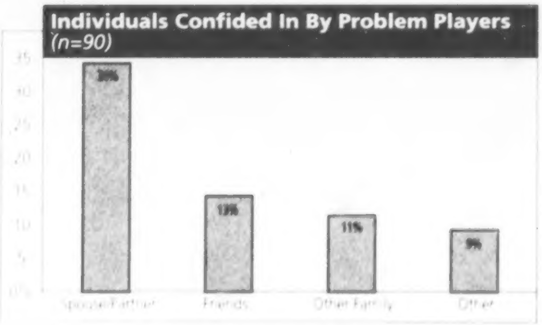
"My financial problems were getting worse. I spent all of my bill money and was borrowing on top of that and getting money illegally too."
(Female, 40 Years, Unresolved Player)

"Because I would get upset when I didn't win. I would get more money through other means to try and win my money back over and over again, and it was like that all the time. I got money through ways I never thought I would and I knew I was in trouble." (Female, 41 Years, Resolved Past Player)

"I started arguing with my girlfriend about where I was for five hours. It got to the point where I physically had to go, even if I didn't have the money to play, I had to go down to look at them." (Male, 52 Years, Unresolved Player)

"I gradually noticed I started to take more money to go play. I'd play longer, I didn't want my wife to know I was playing so I'd go play when she wouldn't be around to know about it. It took me a long time to admit that I had a problem."
(Male, 40 Years, Resolved Past Player)

ADMISSION OF A PROBLEM


Individuals Confided In By Problem Players
(n=90)

Problem Players were also asked about their admission of a VL problem to others. Two-thirds (64%) reported having confided in someone, whereas one-third (36%) had not. Players in each Problem Player group were equally likely to have discussed their problem with someone else, primarily a family member.

Over half (53%) of those who admitted to a problem told their spouse or partner, representing one-third (34%) of all Problem Players. Resolved Present Players are twice as likely to have admitted their difficulties to a spouse/partner than Resolved Past Players (50% versus 25%; p<.10), suggesting that spousal support may be a significant factor in players' ability to continue playing VLT's, but maintain control after experiencing problems.

Approximately 13% of all Problem Players confided their problem play to a friend, and a similar proportion talked to another family member (child, sibling, parent). Nine percent report telling another source, including GA (2%) and/or a health professional (2%).

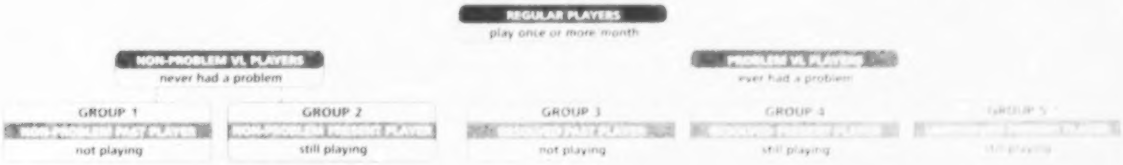
Most Problem Players are not triggered by a specific event into realizing a problem exists. However, Resolved Present Players are almost twice as likely to recall a specific moment when they recognized a problem with their video lottery play. It may be that such a "moment of truth" or the self-realization of a problem following an isolated event assists the player in moderating or exerting control over their behaviour. Whether problems are recognized gradually or through a specific event, financial problems and a sense that time and money is being wasted are the two primary "eye openers." Most Problem Players confide in someone once they realize a problem exists, primarily a spouse or partner. This is especially true of the Resolved Present Players. To a lesser extent, other family and friends are also confided in. It appears that formal sources of help are not used when the Problem Player first wishes to talk about their problem. Thus, at this point, it will often fall upon the spouse, family or friends to seek out additional information and/or assistance in attempts to help the Problem VL Gambler. Ensuring the information is available with initial assistance aimed at targeting or supporting family members or friends will greatly enhance dissemination of the information and subsequent action undertaken.

STOPPING OR REDUCING VLT PLAY

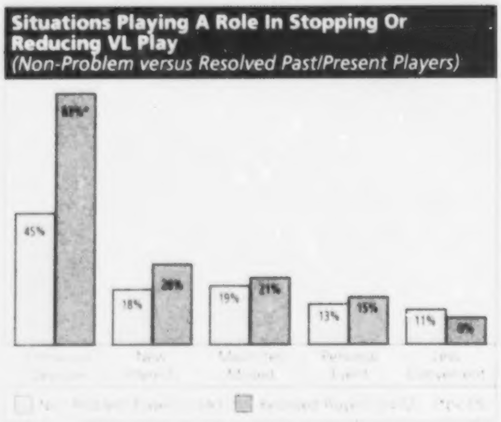
Only Non-Problem Players and those Problem Players who have either successfully stopped or reduced their VL play were questioned as to the factors influencing this behaviour. While several situational factors appear to have an important role in play reduction or cessation, having made a conscious decision to stop or reduce play has twice the effect. **This signifies the importance of internal over external control factors in how Problem Players first come to stop or reduce their play.**

There are few notable differences among Non-Problem or Problem Players in the situations leading to play reductions. The only exception is that **Problem Players were almost twice as likely to make a conscious decision to stop playing than Non-Problem Players,** suggesting that quitting or cutting back requires more of a deliberate commitment for the Problem Players. While this result is not particularly surprising, what may be somewhat unexpected is that almost half (45%) of the Non-Problem Players also noted making a conscious decision to stop or reduce play. This suggests that even for those who have not developed significant difficulties with their VL play, the reduction of the activity merits deliberate consideration. **Thus, reductions of play and/or stopping by Non-Problem Players are also strategies for controlling behaviour, and potentially avoiding problem development.**

Taking up other or new interests and having the imposition of restricted machine access (i.e., relocation from the corner stores into licensed establishments) were also important in motivating players in general to stop or



control their play. Many players described themselves as "non-bar types" and had no desire to follow the machines into the licensed establishments. Only small minorities of players were triggered into stopping or reducing play for reasons such as the birth of a child or the loss of a job. **It is noteworthy that, in general, Non-Problem and Problem Players were equally likely to cite the role of these external factors in influencing or precipitating the reduction or cessation of VL gambling.**


Situations Playing A Role In Stopping Or Reducing VL Play
(Non-Problem versus Resolved Past/Present Players)

"I realized it was a waste of time and money so the temptation was not there. Machines were moved from the stores. Out of sight, out of mind."
(Male, 38 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I guess I wasn't winning as often so I decided not to play and I don't go to bars and because the VLT's were taken out of the corner stores, they're not as accessible."(Male, 34 years, Non Problem Present Player)

"They moved them out of the stores and I'm not a bar person and I got married around the same time and moved to the city." (Female, 29 years, Resolved Past Player)

Among the Problem Players there are several important differences. As expected, the Unresolved Players were less likely to have stopped or reduced their play due to a conscious decision (35% versus 83% to 89%; p<.05), the machines being moved into licensed establishments (7% versus ≥22%; p<.10), or because of a significant personal event (7% versus ≥20%; p<.10) than the other Problem Player segments. Undoubtedly, this is an artifact of their unresolved problem play, as only 46% of Unresolved Players have undertaken play reductions with any degree of success. More interesting, Resolved Past Players were more likely than other Problem Players to have quit or cut back VL because they had experienced a significant personal event (26% versus 7%; p<.10). When players, excluding the completely unresolved, were asked to elaborate on how they came to stop or control their VLT play, a clearer picture emerges. Except for the Unresolved Players, about a third of the other player segments expressed concern over **not winning** and **wasting money**. Resolved Past Players, however, were more likely to have **feared the financial consequences of their play** (36%) and were, subsequently, **motivated to get help** (9%), suggesting that the situation may have reached more significant levels for these players. Resolved Present Players, on the other hand, **reduced their VLT expenditure** (36%) instead of stopping or getting help (0%). The Problem Player segments, collectively, were the only players to mention that they stopped or reduced their VL play due to **mental health issues** (≤7%).

"I realized I was hurting myself and destroying my family."
(Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The fear of losing my house, my family." (Male, 29 years, Resolved Past Player)

"My wife and I decided to get help." (Male, 43 years, Resolved Past Player)

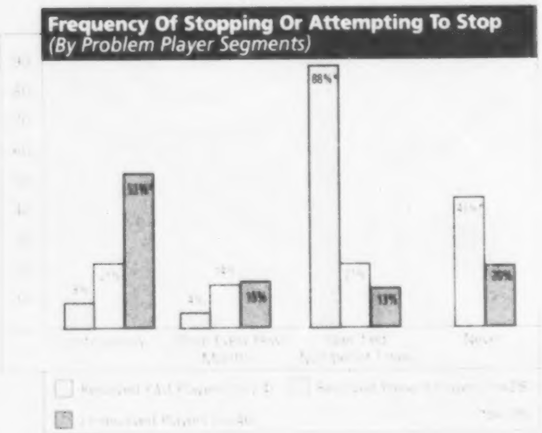
"A friend told me he had a problem and we both went to GA. GA really helped me out. I heard sad stories and realized I still had time to help myself."
(Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I reduced play after I decided they weren't paying out like I thought and I was losing."(Male, 43 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I decided enough was enough because I worked hard for that money."
(Male, 35 years, Resolved Present Player)

FREQUENCY OF STOPPING OR REDUCING VLT PLAY

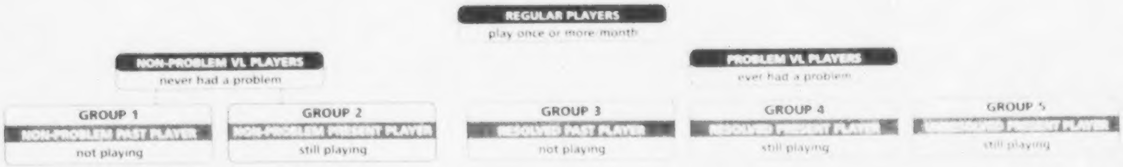
Most Problem Players (73%) reported that they had deliberately stopped or attempted to stop playing VLT's for an extended period of time. This finding supports the results in the Problem Players Analysis from the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, where 70% of Problem Players had reported trying to stop playing in the past year.

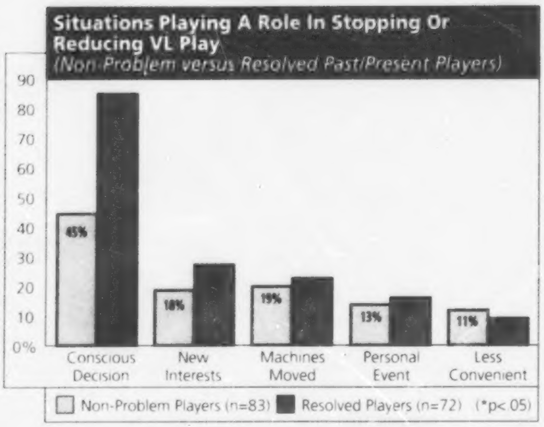

Frequency Of Stopping Or Attempting To Stop
(By Problem Player Segments)

It appears that for most Problem Players, stopping or reducing VL play is an ongoing process. One half (49%) of Problem Players state that they are continuously trying to stop or reduce their VLT play, while another 17% attempt to do so every few months. Of those who have attempted to stop or reduce their VL play for any other number of times, 78% have tried on more than one occasion.

There are some important differences among the groups in terms of their efforts to stop playing altogether.

There are also distinct differences among the three Problem Player groups regarding triggers for relapse and successful resolution.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
still playing



Situations Playing A Role In Stopping Or Reducing VL Play
(Non-Problem versus Resolved Past/Present Players)

control their play. Many players described themselves as "non-bar types" and had no desire to follow the machines into the licensed establishments. Only small minorities of players were triggered into stopping or reducing play for reasons such as the birth of a child or the loss of a job. **It is noteworthy that, in general, Non-Problem and Problem Players were equally likely to cite the role of these external factors in influencing or precipitating the reduction or cessation of VL gambling.**

"I realized it was a waste of time and money so the temptation was not there. Machines were moved from the stores. Out of sight, out of mind."
(Male, 38 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I guess I wasn't winning as often so I decided not to play and I don't go to bars and because the VLT's were taken out of the corner stores, they're not as accessible."(Male, 34 years, Non-Problem Present Player)

"They moved them out of the stores and I'm not a bar person and I got married around the same time and moved to the city." (Female, 29 years, Resolved Past Player)

Among the Problem Players there are several important differences. As expected, the Unresolved Players were less likely to have stopped or reduced their play due to a conscious decision (35% versus 83% to 89%; $p<.05$), the machines being moved into licensed establishments (7% versus ≈22%; $p<.10$), or because of a significant personal event (7% versus ≈20%; $p<.10$) than the other Problem Player segments. Undoubtedly, this is an artifact of their unresolved problem play, as only 46% of Unresolved Players have undertaken play reductions with any degree of success. More interesting, Resolved Past Players were more likely than other Problem Players to have quit or cut back VL because they had experienced a significant personal event (26% versus 7%; $p<.10$). When players, excluding the completely unresolved, were asked to elaborate on how they came to stop or control their VLT play, a clearer picture emerges. Except for the Unresolved Players, about a third of the other player segments expressed concern over **not winning** and **wasting money.** Resolved Past Players, however, were more likely to have **feared the financial consequences of their play** (36%) and were, subsequently, **motivated to get help** (9%), suggesting that the situation may have reached more significant levels for these players. Resolved Present Players, on the other hand, **reduced their VLT expenditure** (36%) instead of stopping or getting help (0%). The Problem Player segments, collectively, were the only players to mention that they stopped or reduced their VL play due to **mental health issues** (≈7%).

"I realized I was hurting myself and destroying my family."
(Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The fear of losing my house, my family." (Male, 29 years, Resolved Past Player)

"My wife and I decided to get help." (Male, 43 years, Resolved Past Player)

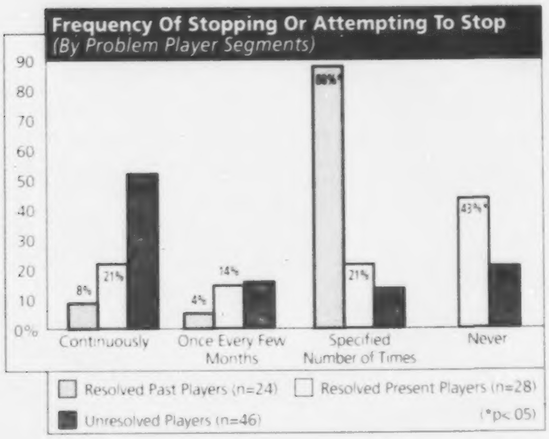
"A friend told me he had a problem and we both went to GA. GA really helped me out. I heard sad stories and realized I still had time to help myself."
(Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I reduced play after I decided they weren't paying out like I thought and I was losing."(Male, 43 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I decided enough was enough because I worked hard for that money."
(Male, 35 years, Resolved Present Player)

FREQUENCY OF STOPPING OR REDUCING VLT PLAY

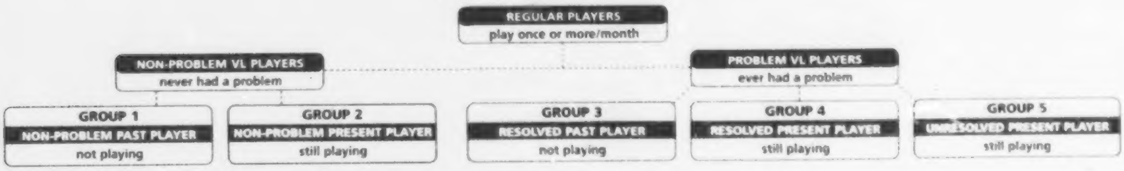
Most Problem Players (73%) reported that they had deliberately stopped or attempted to stop playing VLT's for an extended period of time. This finding supports the results in the Problem Players Analysis from the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, where 70% of Problem Players had reported trying to stop playing in the past year.



It appears that for most Problem Players, stopping or reducing VL play is an ongoing process. One half (49%) of Problem Players state that they are continuously trying to stop or reduce their VLT play, while another 17% attempt to do so every few months. Of those who have attempted to stop or reduce their VL play for any other number of times, 78% have tried on more than one occasion.

There are some important differences among the groups in terms of their efforts to stop playing altogether.

There are also distinct differences among the three Problem Player groups regarding triggers for relapse and successful resolution.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

MITIGATING FACTORS FOR STOPPING OR PLAY REDUCTION BY PROBLEM PLAYER SEGMENT

MITIGATING FACTORS - RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYERS

Almost half of the Resolved Present Players (43%) have never made a deliberate attempt to stop playing VLT's. For these Resolved Present Players, their goal was to reduce or change their play, not to terminate the activity. Approximately one-fifth of the Resolved Present Players reported they had stopped or attempted to stop playing VLT's on only one to two occasions before returning to reduced play levels. For the remaining 35%, stopping or attempting to stop was a more continuous effort. For these individuals, the primary triggers for resuming play after stopping were attributed to exposure to the machines (18%), boredom (11%) and play by friends and family members (7%). **Lifestyle or situational factors appear to impact the success of the Resolved Present Players in completely terminating VLT play. Thus, a reduced or controlled play approach may have offered a more realistic solution for them.**

"My friends always wanted me to go play with them."
(Female, 32 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I just did it for the heck of it, something to do. If you win, great. If you don't that's okay too." (Male, 33 years, Resolved Present Player)

"Just being in places that have them all the time."
(Male, 31 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I'd be in a bar for a drink and end up playing." (Male, 52 years, Resolved Present Player)

"At times when I would go to the bar and my friends were all playing, I just ended up playing too. (Male, 49 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I would be in a location and was bored, looking for something to do."
(Male, 27 years, Resolved Present Player)

The primary reason Resolved Present Players cite for their current success in managing their VL play is the **realization and acceptance that they cannot win playing the machines.** Resolved Present Players are three times more likely than those who have resolved their VL play through abstinence (Resolved Past Players) to note the role of this realization in changing their play behaviours. **Two-thirds of those Resolved Present Players who have reduced play after previous attempts attributed their current success to adopting a more realistic approach and appreciation of the games' outcomes.**

Other strategies contributing to their current success consist largely of reducing their access to the machines (≈16%).

"I feel they are useless and you usually don't win. I'm at the point where I don't play as much because of that." (Female, 33 years, Resolved Present Player)

"Now, we realize it was a waste of money. Before, we always might win and get a quick buck. I now realize the machines are designed to make money, not pay it out to you." (Male, 58 years, Resolved Present Player)

"They don't payout as much now so I don't play as often now as I did before." (Female, 39 years, Resolved Present Player)

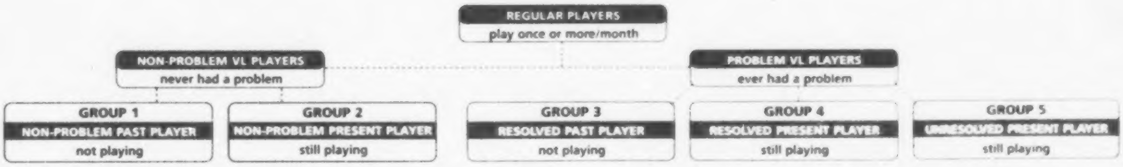
"I can see I wasn't winning anything back any more and the government payouts are less." (Male, 52 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I can see it was a waste of money and that the payouts now are almost nil." (Male, 49 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I just realized it was a money issue. I wasn't going to waste any more than $25 each time and that was it." (Male, 36 years, Resolved Present Player)

Comparatively, Resolved Present Players are least likely to have deliberately decided to stop playing (p<.05), although 89% made a conscious decision to reduce their play levels. It appears that lifestyle and other situational issues make "reduced play" a more viable resolution option for these players, as opposed to abstinence. Given their ability to exert control over their play behaviour, abstinence is not a necessary condition for problem VL gambling resolution for these Resolved Present Players. The key factor contributing to the success of their resolved play is the recognition that they cannot come out ahead in the long run when playing VLT's.

In many cases, it appears that Resolved Present Players still express inaccurate beliefs about why they win less or, more importantly, are losing more than when they first started to play. The results suggest that for many Resolved Present Players, their long-term experience of losing is inconsistent with their earlier exposure to wins. They rationalize this as being attributable to changes in payouts or government-initiated reductions in wins ("the machines just don't pay out any more like they used to"). However, as was determined in the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, Section 3.0 - Problem VL Gamblers' Analysis, Problem Players will derive lower "cashout" than Non-Problem Players, due to significant differences in how these two types of players play the games (i.e., reinvestment of winnings, length of play, increased bet levels, etc.). In fact, in a VLT simulation designed by Focal Research Consultants to model the impact of player behaviour on game outcomes it was found,


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

Other strategies contributing to their current success consist largely of reducing their access to the machines (≈16%).

"I feel they are useless and you usually don't win. I'm at the point where I don't play as much because of that." (Female, 33 years, Resolved Present Player)

"Now, we realize it was a waste of money. Before, we always might win and get a quick buck. I now realize the machines are designed to make money, not pay it out to you." (Male, 58 years, Resolved Present Player)

"They don't payout as much now so I don't play as often now as I did before." (Female, 39 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I can see I wasn't winning anything back any more and the government payouts are less." (Male, 52 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I can see it was a waste of money and that the payouts now are almost nil." (Male, 49 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I just realized it was a money issue. I wasn't going to waste any more than $25 each time and that was it." (Male, 36 years, Resolved Present Player)

Comparatively, Resolved Present Players are least likely to have deliberately decided to stop playing (p<.05), although 89% made a conscious decision to reduce their play levels. It appears that lifestyle and other situational issues make "reduced play" a more viable resolution option for these players, as opposed to abstinence. Given their ability to exert control over their play behaviour, abstinence is not a necessary condition for problem VL gambling resolution for these Resolved Present Players. The key factor contributing to the success of their resolved play is the recognition that they cannot come out ahead in the long run when playing VLT's.

In many cases, it appears that Resolved Present Players still express inaccurate beliefs about why they win less or, more importantly, are losing more than when they first started to play. The results suggest that for many Resolved Present Players, their long-term experience of losing is inconsistent with their earlier exposure to wins. They rationalize this as being attributable to changes in payouts or government-initiated reductions in wins ("the machines just don't pay out any more like they used to"). However, as was determined in the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, Section 3.0 - Problem VL Gamblers' Analysis, Problem Players will derive lower "cashout" than Non-Problem Players, due to significant differences in how these two types of players play the games (i.e., reinvestment of winnings, length of play, increased bet levels, etc.). In fact, in a VLT simulation designed by Focal Research Consultants to model the impact of player behaviour on game outcomes it was found,

REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

on average, that Problem Players will only get back 37¢ for every dollar they wager on VLT's versus approximately 70¢ for Non-Problem Players. Thus, as players develop problems with their VL gambling, over time they really will experience a decline in their "cashout" (amount of credits and/or money cashed out as a percentage of the total credits and/or cash put into the machines) and "cashback" (amount of money they walk away with from a session as a result of how much they spent out-of-pocket), although the payout always remains the same (i.e., 95%). While they are aware of the declining return derived from their play, they erroneously attribute it to changes in "payouts" rather than resulting from changes in their play behaviour. Regardless, the outcome is still the same (they realize they are losing and can't win and this leads to reduced play).

The VL gambling problems of the Resolved Present Players appear to be less severe and complex than the Resolved Past Players, yet they undoubtedly have encountered difficulties that strongly differentiate their past problem play from non-problem play. Resolved Present Players had to learn about the games from their experience, essentially recognizing the inconsistency between their beliefs and experiences, and adjusting both their expectations and behaviour to match the game outcomes. This suggests that the problems Resolved Present Players encounter, and the solutions, are largely driven by their interaction and experience with the machine rather than precipitated or exacerbated by pre-existing and/or external conditions or circumstances. Once they recognize they are spending more than they win, and that this outcome will persist, they are less interested in the games. However, due to their continuing exposure and the involvement of friends and family, they continue to engage in play, but at reduced levels with reduced expectations.

The responses of the Resolved Present Players suggest that there is opportunity for education and interventions from a harm minimization perspective. In particular, communication strategies pointing out inaccurate beliefs and directly relating this information to the experience of players (such as the influence of early wins on subsequent behaviour, the impact of length of play, etc.) can serve to heighten the awareness and sensitivity of players and their peer or reference groups to the risk factors associated with VL gambling. Educating the population on how the games really work and how specific play behaviours contribute to problem development may serve to counter the myths and rationalizations people develop in the absence of any factual information. This may effectively contribute to harm minimization by reducing the time it takes for the players to learn this on their own, often with negative or severe consequences.

These Resolved Present Players are relying on internal control mechanisms to regulate their play. As they are still taking part in the activity, there is risk that they could lapse back again into difficulties, especially if circumstances should change (i.e., loss of job, financial difficulties, relationship problems, etc.) or, for example, if they should experience a big win. Including the intervention at a machine level on the VLT's is also another way of effectively reaching those most in need at a point when an intervention would yield the greatest benefits.

MITIGATING FACTORS - RESOLVED PAST PLAYERS

The Resolved Past Players exhibit a distinctly different pattern of stopping. All of these past problem players at the time of the survey had stopped playing and have been "VLT free," on average, for approximately two years. Almost half (48%) of these Resolved Past Players required only one attempt to successfully give up play. For the remaining Resolved Past Players (≈52%), more attempts were required, although this tended to consist of approximately two to four efforts as opposed to a continual or on-going struggle. Similar to the Resolved Present Players, their primary trigger for relapse is also exposure to the machines (17%). However, those adopting an abstinence approach to their problem resolution are also likely to note boredom and loneliness (13%),depression/personal problems (13%) and chasing losses (13%) as key triggers to start playing again. There was also evidence of Resolved Past Players wanting to test their ability to play without problems and concluding it was not possible for them.

"Just to see if I was cured type of thing. To see if I could put in one dollar and walk away." (Male, 29 years, Resolved Past Player)

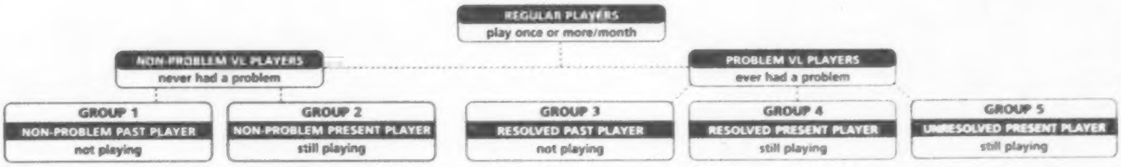
"An argument with my spouse, to get back at him. Stress from my job or our financial situation. A strong craving to play." (Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The financial stress and personal problems."
(Male, 38 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Just got depressed or bored with my job and my personal relationships."
(Male, 43 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Going to a bar and seeing them and other people playing."
(Male, 36 years, Resolved Past Player)

Resolved Past Players also tended to attribute their current success in solving their VL gambling problems to different factors than the Resolved Present Players. They were **significantly less likely to note the realization that they could not win playing the games** (13% versus 38%; p<.10) and, essentially, was the only group in which anyone noted **relationship changes** (9%) and **formal support services** (13%) as being instrumental to their ability to successfully stop play. Only the Resolved Past Players (9%) and Unresolved Players (11%) specifically mentioned **financial constraints** as a critical factor in terminating (or reducing) play. The Resolved Past Players also noted the positive role of restricting their access to the machines by **avoiding VLT locations** (13%).


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

"I don't frequent the places I used to go. The money situation isn't great. The bills piled up and there is no extra money." (Male, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I feel better emotionally. I know now, I sat and watched people, saw the looks on their faces when they lost and had to go get more money and thought that used to be me." (Male, 47 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I honestly don't know. I was lucky that God listened to my prayers and answered me. I had the discipline to stop through my prayers and the group [GA]. I learned a lot on the Serenity Prayer." (Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I've moved since then so my environment is different. I remind myself how broke I was. I don't have the local bars I used to go to since I moved." (Male, 33 years, Resolved Past Player)

"My husband isn't around to make me want to play, he played them all the time and now we have broken up. I can manage on my own, I find it's much better." (Female, 41 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Well, I'm in a different relationship. We don't go to the bars so I'm not tempted to now." (Female, 26 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Well, this time I admitted my problems to myself and made changes in my life. Going to GA helped me face it." (Female, 52 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The money isn't there to play them. We are on a low income and have two kids so the money just isn't there to spend on the machines." (Female, 23 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Out of sight, out of mind. I won't allow myself to go to any of the places that have them and going to GA helped out a lot." (Male, 40 years, Resolved Past Player)

For Resolved Past Players, dysphoric mood states, loneliness and boredom, personal and financial stresses and accessibility are key triggers for relapse. Conversely, external constraints and support services are most likely to provide the greatest benefits in avoiding play, as these individuals appear to lack the internal control (i.e., willpower) to regulate their play in the face of the machines. For some, the ability to abstain from play is wholly dependent upon the external constraints (at least initially) and, thus, in the absence of the constraining situation, they are at risk to play again. For these types of players, programs or assistance which initially restrict their ability to play may be essential until long-term development of new activities, improved mental health, financial stability and relationship improvements enable the individual to maintain control over their behaviour by removing the need for the activity. Such voluntary, short-term initiatives, which may enhance long-term resolution of their VL problem, could include:

- **avoidance strategies, including VLT locations as well as acquaintances, friends and family members who play the games;**
- **soliciting the cooperation of others in supporting their commitment to abstain,**

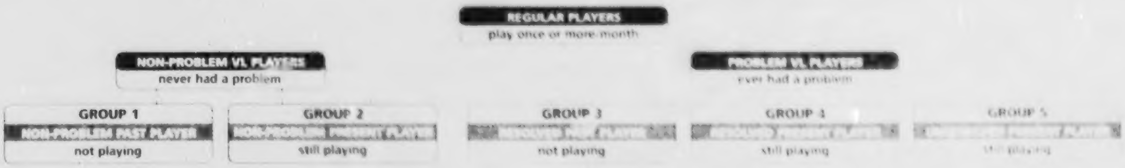
including service personnel at VL locations;
- restricting financial access to play and borrowing of funds (i.e., having spouse/partner or another individual control finances, direct deposit of pay cheques, dual signature bank accounts or other funds, instructing friends, etc., to not lend even insignificant amounts);
- programs or assistance which allow individuals to self-restrict participation in the VL activity;
- introduction of alternative activities to fill in the time previously dedicated to VL play;
- acceptance of a more holistic approach to treatment whereby the individual is treated rather than just the problem gambling.

Short-term or temporary options for eliminating the activity may allow these types of Problem Players to start to regain control and focus on resolving other issues that may be contributing to the need for VL gambling. In some cases, individuals may never be able to free themselves of the mitigating factors and, thus, redirecting their attention to less damaging pursuits will be contingent upon their complete abstinence from VL gambling. For others, however, the problem VL gambling may only be a symptom of other problems, internalized as part of a coping strategy that in and of itself becomes problematic (possibly due, in part, to the short-term effectiveness of the activity in countering other negative situations in an individual's life).

MITIGATING FACTORS - UNRESOLVED PLAYERS

Two-thirds of Unresolved Players are trying to stop playing VLT's on either a continuous (52%) or periodic basis of once every few months (15%). Only 20% report they have never made any attempts to completely abstain from play, with their efforts largely focused on play reductions. It will be recalled that Unresolved Players are not a homogeneous group; just under half (46%) report partial resolution of their VL problem gambling, although they continue to play the games with varying degrees of difficulty. Additional analysis can profile and compare the Partially Resolved versus the Unresolved Players to further assess differences among current Problem Players and the relative effectiveness of the various coping strategies used by those currently experiencing problems. Regardless, those who have not completely resolved their problem VL gambling appear to be trying to address the issue, with limited success at best.

Undoubtedly, the most significant trigger impacting the ability of Unresolved Players to stop or even reduce play is exposure to the machines. Approximately one-third of Unresolved Players note that accessibility or simply "seeing the machines" is sufficient to induce a relapse. Some cite the "urge to play" as a trigger (13%); and "giving in" to the temptation of testing their ability "to play and walk away" (11%). While boredom and loneliness are just as likely to induce relapse for all past and present Problem Players (~11%), the Unresolved Players typically are not citing depression and personal problems as primary triggers (2%). Thus, it appears that for the Unresolved Players, **response towards the machines themselves most often interferes with their ability to sustain abstinence or controlled play. They report lacking the internal capability or "willpower" to counter both the internal drive to play and the powerful external stimulus presented by the machines.**



"I don't frequent the places I used to go. The money situation isn't great. The bills piled up and there is no extra money." (Male, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I feel better emotionally. I know now, I sat and watched people, saw the looks on their faces when they lost and had to go get more money and thought that used to be me." (Male, 47 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I honestly don't know. I was lucky that God listened to my prayers and answered me. I had the discipline to stop through my prayers and the group [GA]. I learned a lot on the Serenity Prayer." (Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I've moved since then so my environment is different. I remind myself how broke I was. I don't have the local bars I used to go to since I moved." (Male, 33 years, Resolved Past Player)

"My husband isn't around to make me want to play, he played them all the time and now we have broken up. I can manage on my own, I find it's much better." (Female, 41 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Well, I'm in a different relationship. We don't go to the bars so I'm not tempted to now." (Female, 26 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Well, this time I admitted my problems to myself and made changes in my life. Going to GA helped me face it." (Female, 52 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The money isn't there to play them. We are on a low income and have two kids so the money just isn't there to spend on the machines." (Female, 23 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Out of sight, out of mind. I won't allow myself to go to any of the places that have them and going to GA helped out a lot." (Male, 40 years, Resolved Past Player)

For Resolved Past Players, dysphoric mood states, loneliness and boredom, personal and financial stresses and accessibility are key triggers for relapse. Conversely, external constraints and support services are most likely to provide the greatest benefits in avoiding play, as these individuals appear to lack the internal control (i.e., willpower) to regulate their play in the face of the machines. For some, the ability to abstain from play is wholly dependent upon the external constraints (at least initially) and, thus, in the absence of the constraining situation, they are at risk to play again. For these types of players, programs or assistance which initially restrict their ability to play may be essential until long-term development of new activities, improved mental health, financial stability and relationship improvements enable the individual to maintain control over their behaviour by removing the need for the activity. Such voluntary, short-term initiatives, which may enhance long-term resolution of their VL problem, could include:

- **avoidance strategies, including VLT locations as well as acquaintances, friends and family members who play the games;**
- **soliciting the cooperation of others in supporting their commitment to abstain,**

including service personnel at VL locations;

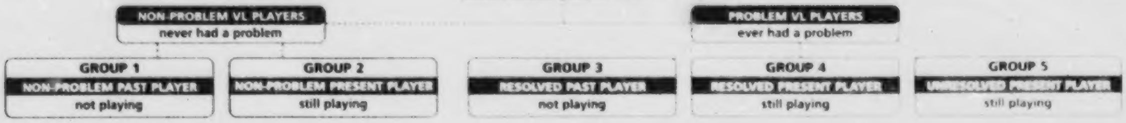
- **restricting financial access to play and borrowing of funds (i.e., having spouse/partner or another individual control finances, direct deposit of pay cheques, dual signature bank accounts or other funds, instructing friends, etc., to not lend even insignificant amounts);**
- **programs or assistance which allow individuals to self-restrict participation in the VL activity;**
- **introduction of alternative activities to fill in the time previously dedicated to VL play;**
- **acceptance of a more holistic approach to treatment whereby the individual is treated rather than just the problem gambling.**

Short-term or temporary options for eliminating the activity may allow these types of Problem Players to start to regain control and focus on resolving other issues that may be contributing to the need for VL gambling. In some cases, individuals may never be able to free themselves of the mitigating factors and, thus, redirecting their attention to less damaging pursuits will be contingent upon their complete abstinence from VL gambling. For others, however, the problem VL gambling may only be a symptom of other problems, internalized as part of a coping strategy that in and of itself becomes problematic (possibly due, in part, to the short-term effectiveness of the activity in countering other negative situations in an individual's life).

MITIGATING FACTORS - UNRESOLVED PLAYERS

Two-thirds of Unresolved Players are trying to stop playing VLT's on either a continuous (52%) or periodic basis of once every few months (15%). Only 20% report they have never made any attempts to completely abstain from play, with their efforts largely focused on play reductions. It will be recalled that Unresolved Players are not a homogeneous group; just under half (46%) report partial resolution of their VL problem gambling, although they continue to play the games with varying degrees of difficulty. Additional analysis can profile and compare the Partially Resolved versus the Unresolved Players to further assess differences among current Problem Players and the relative effectiveness of the various coping strategies used by those currently experiencing problems. Regardless, those who have not completely resolved their problem VL gambling appear to be trying to address the issue, with limited success at best.

Undoubtedly, the most significant trigger impacting the ability of Unresolved Players to stop or even reduce play is exposure to the machines. Approximately one-third of Unresolved Players note that accessibility or simply "seeing the machines" is sufficient to induce a relapse. Some cite the "urge to play" as a trigger (13%); and "giving in" to the temptation of testing their ability "to play and walk away" (11%). While boredom and loneliness are just as likely to induce relapse for all past and present Problem Players (≈11%), the Unresolved Players typically are not citing depression and personal problems as primary triggers (2%). Thus, it appears that for the Unresolved Players, **response towards the machines themselves most often interferes with their ability to sustain abstinence or controlled play. They report lacking the internal capability or "willpower" to counter both the internal drive to play and the powerful external stimulus presented by the machines.**



"Just in a place where they are and every time I play, every single time."
(Male, 58 Years, Unresolved Player)

"I always end up playing and can't stop, I don't know why."
(Male, 28 Years, Unresolved Player)

"The addiction. I never really got away from it. If I had a loonie in my pocket, I had to put it in." (Female, 59 Years, Partially Resolved Player)

"It was a spur of the moment thing. I would be somewhere where they had the machines and I would just have to go play them again."
(Male, 30 Years, Unresolved Player)

"The thought is always in the back of my mind to go and play and eventually I do. No real reason." (Male, 54 Years, Unresolved Player)

"I went to see if I could play without any more problems, but that wasn't so."
(Male, 37 Years, Unresolved Player)

"Boredom. The thrill of beating the machine. I stopped for 8 months and went to the casino with no problems. When I got home, within two weeks I was back in the bars playing again. Thought it wouldn't be a problem 'cause the casino went so well." (Male, 51 Years, Unresolved Player)

"Friends are playing and say, 'here's fifty dollars, go play.' They gave me money to play with and they never encouraged me to stop, instead they were encouraging me to play." (Female, 28 Years, Unresolved Player)

"I think probably I thought I could play again without any problems at all, but that wasn't true." (Female, 30 Years, Unresolved Player)

"I always knew it was possible to win, that's what gets and keeps me playing."
(Male, 41 Years, Partially Resolved Player)

"Boredom, nothing else." (Female, 49 Years, Unresolved Player)

Those Unresolved Players who had achieved at least partial success in addressing their problem VL gambling (46%; n=21) were questioned as to the reasons underlying their success. Similar to responses obtained by Resolved Players, over one-third (37%) of these Partially Resolved Problem Players noted the **realization and acceptance that they cannot win** and the **financial extent of their losses**, as playing key roles in their struggle towards problem play resolution. It is noteworthy that there is very little overlap among those citing specific reasons for partial resolution of problem VL play, which again emphasizes that the Unresolved Player group is not homogeneous in nature.

"I think because the payouts aren't as big as what they used to be and I don't get any of my money back like I used to." (Female, 52 Years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I'm done giving them large amounts, you don't win anyway. I can limit myself to a certain extent." (Male, 31 Years, Partially Resolved Player)

"Because I'm mean with my money now after I watched the balance of my bank account disappear." (Female, 34 Years, Partially Resolved Player)

"Because I finally realized how much money I was actually spending and losing." (Male, 22 Years, Partially Resolved Player)

Another group of Partially Resolved Players cited the role of external constraints in assisting them exert some control over play. Almost one-quarter specifically mentioned **reduced financial circumstances** as a mitigating factor (23%), with a similar proportion attributing their partial success to **lifestyle changes.**

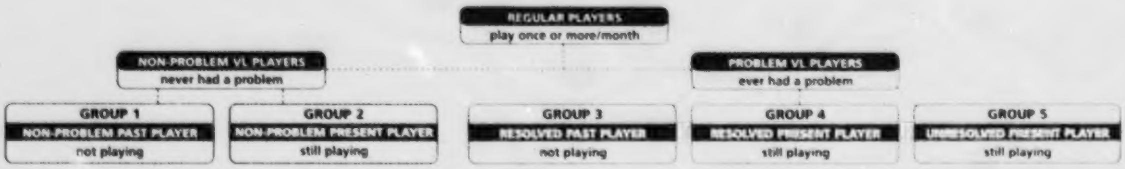
"I just can't afford it now." (Male, 53 Years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I don't have any extra money to play. I know in my mind I can't go and play. If I had the money I know I would be playing." (Male, 52 Years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I haven't stopped now, but I've cut down a lot. I spend a lot more time with my son and don't have time to play as much." (Male, 22 Years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I think, for me, I had a family and now I have different priorities (a child) and I feel more responsible now than then." (Female, 30 Years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I realized I couldn't keep living like I was, I spent my bill money, rent money and it made me sick. I want a better life for me and my son." (Female, 44 Years, Partially Resolved Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

Those Unresolved Players who haven't been able to achieve any level of resolution of their problem VL gambling were asked to identify what they believe are the most important factors interfering with their ability to stop play. Almost half of these individuals attributed their problem in stopping either to a **lack of willpower** (47%) or the **appeal of the activity** (40%). **There is almost no overlap among those citing either of these two reasons, suggesting that the responses reflect two fairly distinct groups of Unresolved Players; those who feel they are "compelled" to play versus those who "want" to play. For the former group especially, accessibility also plays a role.**

"I don't know, I just need to play them. It's weird. I used to be addicted to cocaine and I stopped that no problem, but the machines are a different story for some reason." (Male, 28 Years, Unresolved Player)

"I just always have the urge to play whenever I'm in a place where they are." (Male, 58 Years, Unresolved Player)

"You just kind of crave it. The addiction, we just have to play." (Female, 50 Years, Unresolved Player)

"I see them, I can't stop. I'm addicted to them. I can't stop." (Male, 47 Years, Unresolved Player)

"It seems like the machines are everywhere and I always want to play, all of the time and I can't stop." (Male, 29 Years, Unresolved Player)

For those who "want" to play and enjoy the activity, boredom, the involvement of other friends and family members, and chasing of losses are also mentioned. These Unresolved Players are still continuing to derive some benefit or value from their involvement in VL gambling. Despite their recognition of their play as having negative consequences, or as being problematic, they still enjoy the activity and are less inclined to report they have no control over their behaviour.

"I'm not doing anything and I'm bored. I live in the country with nothing to do so I play the machines all the time." (Female, 64 Years, Unresolved Player)

"I don't want to stop, I like playing them." (Female, 46 Years, Unresolved Player)

"It's that they are fun and I don't really want to stop playing them at this time even though I know it's a waste of money ." (Male, 30 Years, Unresolved Player)

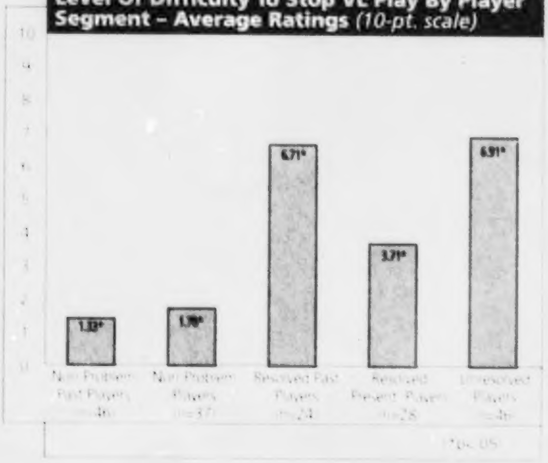
"I would like to get my money back. I enjoy playing, it's relaxing and something for me to do. I like playing at the quiet places not the noisy ones." (Female, 53 Years, Unresolved Player)

Those Problem VL Players who have been unable to completely resolve their VL gambling problems are not a homogeneous group. They tend to exhibit similarities to both the Resolved Past Players and Resolved Present Players, with the majority trying to stop and/or control their play on a fairly continuous basis with little to no success. The primary catalyst for relapse is almost exclusively attributed to exposure to the machines, often compounded by the internal "urge" to actually seek out the activity. A distinctive group of those still engaged in problem VL gambling are characterized by an overwhelming lack of internal control over the activity that is most often attributed to "addiction" or compulsion. There is a reported lack of understanding as to "what" is motivating their play behaviour and they appear to be resigned to the fact that they are not able to exert control at this time. For these individuals, external constraints such as lack of financial resources and lifestyle changes are most likely to be reported as key interventions in interrupting or stopping play, but there is often little confidence as to the long-term cessation of play. Unlike the Resolved Past Players, these Unresolved VL Players are not seeking out professional assistance, thus, a proactive approach will be required specifically targeting those most in need.

Conversely, there is another group of Unresolved Players who are playing because "they want to" rather than because "they have to." These Unresolved Players are still deriving entertainment value from the games, despite the fact that they recognize their involvement in VL gambling as being problematic. Different strategies will be required to assist these Unresolved Players, some of whom may be candidates for controlled play as opposed to abstinence. The results obtained for the two Resolved Player groups offer considerable insight as to potential options for assisting those involved in problem VL gambling.

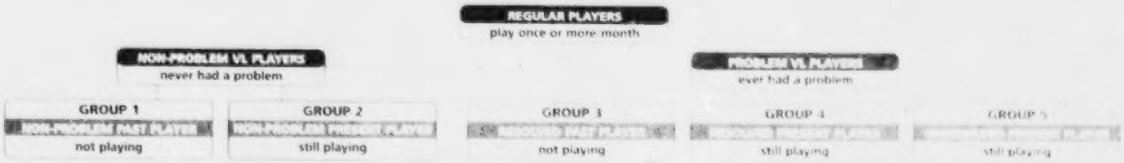
STOPPING BEHAVIOUR & OUTCOMES

Level Of Difficulty To Stop VL Play By Player Segment – Average Ratings *(10-pt. scale)*



To assess the relative challenge represented by stopping VL play among the various player segments, all respondents were asked to rate the level of difficulty they either experienced or would experience in trying to stop playing video lottery machines. A 10-point scale was used whereby 1 means stopping was/is not at all difficult and 10 means it was/is extremely difficult.

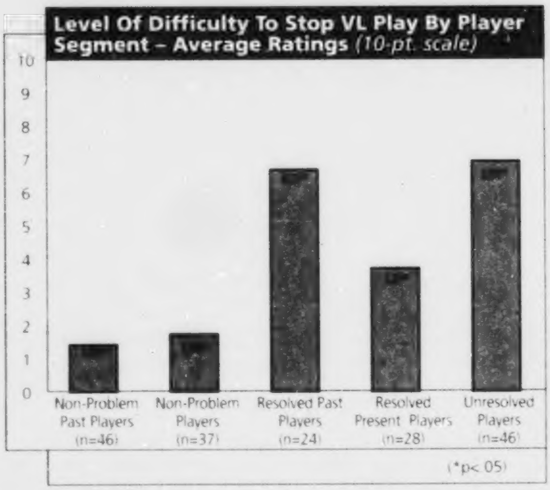
For the Non-Problem Player segments, cessation of VL play poses little to no challenge. Overall, approximately 79% of Non-Problem Players, past and present, attributed the lowest rating possible (1/10) to the level of difficulty they encountered (or might


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
still playing

Those Problem VL Players who have been unable to completely resolve their VL gambling problems are not a homogeneous group. They tend to exhibit similarities to both the Resolved Past Players and Resolved Present Players, with the majority trying to stop and/or control their play on a fairly continuous basis with little to no success. The primary catalyst for relapse is almost exclusively attributed to exposure to the machines, often compounded by the internal "urge" to actually seek out the activity. A distinctive group of those still engaged in problem VL gambling are characterized by an overwhelming lack of internal control over the activity that is most often attributed to "addiction" or compulsion. There is a reported lack of understanding as to "what" is motivating their play behaviour and they appear to be resigned to the fact that they are not able to exert control at this time. For these individuals, external constraints such as lack of financial resources and lifestyle changes are most likely to be reported as key interventions in interrupting or stopping play, but there is often little confidence as to the long-term cessation of play. Unlike the Resolved Past Players, these Unresolved VL Players are not seeking out professional assistance, thus, a proactive approach will be required specifically targeting those most in need.

Conversely, there is another group of Unresolved Players who are playing because "they want to" rather than because "they have to." These Unresolved Players are still deriving entertainment value from the games, despite the fact that they recognize their involvement in VL gambling as being problematic. Different strategies will be required to assist these Unresolved Players, some of whom may be candidates for controlled play as opposed to abstinence. The results obtained for the two Resolved Player groups offer considerable insight as to potential options for assisting those involved in problem VL gambling.

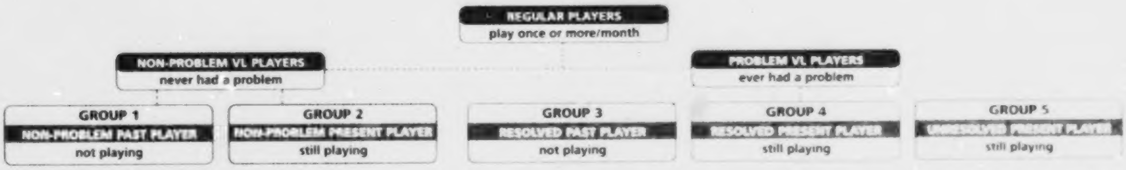
STOPPING BEHAVIOUR & OUTCOMES


Level Of Difficulty To Stop VL Play By Player Segment – Average Ratings *(10-pt. scale)*

(*p< 05)

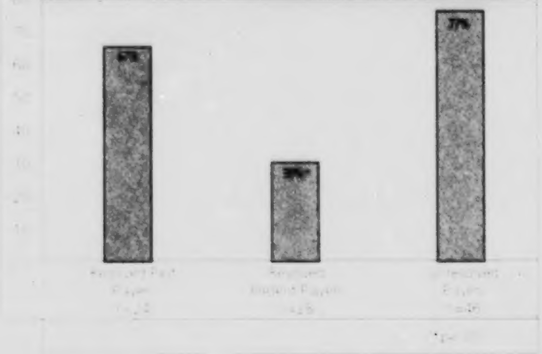
To assess the relative challenge represented by stopping VL play among the various player segments, all respondents were asked to rate the level of difficulty they either experienced or would experience in trying to stop playing video lottery machines. A 10-point scale was used whereby 1 means stopping was/is not at all difficult and 10 means it was/is extremely difficult.

For the Non-Problem Player segments, cessation of VL play poses little to no challenge. Overall, approximately 79% of Non-Problem Players, past and present, attributed the lowest rating possible (1/10) to the level of difficulty they encountered (or might


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

encounter) in stopping play. In contrast, only 4%, or 1 individual, in both the Resolved Past Players and Unresolved Players segments reported a rating of 1 out of 10. It is noteworthy that 25% of Resolved Present Players, who have undertaken a controlled play strategy, indicated it is not at all difficult for them to stop (1/10). Only 30% of these Resolved Present Players reported a difficulty rating of 5 or higher, as compared to 77% for the Unresolved Players and 67% of Resolved Past Players.

Percentage Of Each Problem Player Segment Rating Stopping Or Reducing Play As Difficult *(>4/10)*



Obviously, the majority of Unresolved Players acknowledge that cessation of play is difficult for them. However, this is also the case for Resolved Past Players, who have successfully given up VL play. **Therefore, the coping strategies and methods used by the Resolved Past Players to stop playing likely offer the greatest insight for assisting those still involved in the most problematic VL gambling.**

POSITIVE CHANGES FROM STOPPING/REDUCING VL PLAY

For all past and present Problem Players, the primary positive change resulting from stopping or reducing VL play was **"more money:"**

"I could put my money to better use. Buy things for myself and the house instead of wasting it on the machines." (Female, 54 years, Resolved Present Player)

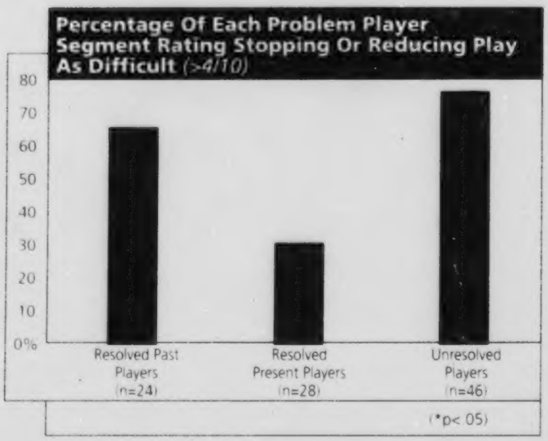
"Had more money to spend on things that my family needs."
(Male, 27 years, Resolved Present Player)

"The bills are getting paid." (Male, 40 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"Less stress - financial and emotional." (Female, 30 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I have more money, my Visa bill is finally going down, I have more time for other people, especially my family and friends."
(Female, 28 years, Partially Resolved Player)

encounter) in stopping play. In contrast, only 4%, or 1 individual, in both the Resolved Past Players and Unresolved Players segments reported a rating of 1 out of 10. It is noteworthy that 25% of Resolved Present Players, who have undertaken a controlled play strategy, indicated it is not at all difficult for them to stop (1/10). Only 30% of these Resolved Present Players reported a difficulty rating of 5 or higher, as compared to 77% for the Unresolved Players and 67% of Resolved Past Players.


Percentage Of Each Problem Player Segment Rating Stopping Or Reducing Play As Difficult *(>4/10)*

Obviously, the majority of Unresolved Players acknowledge that cessation of play is difficult for them. However, this is also the case for Resolved Past Players, who have successfully given up VL play. **Therefore, the coping strategies and methods used by the Resolved Past Players to stop playing likely offer the greatest insight for assisting those still involved in the most problematic VL gambling.**

POSITIVE CHANGES FROM STOPPING/REDUCING VL PLAY

For all past and present Problem Players, the primary positive change resulting from stopping or reducing VL play was **"more money:"**

"I could put my money to better use. Buy things for myself and the house instead of wasting it on the machines." (Female, 54 years, Resolved Present Player)

"Had more money to spend on things that my family needs."
(Male, 27 years, Resolved Present Player)

"The bills are getting paid." (Male, 40 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"Less stress - financial and emotional." (Female, 30 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I have more money, my Visa bill is finally going down, I have more time for other people, especially my family and friends."
(Female, 28 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I have more money. There's a big change in my standard of living now. Have money in my account all the time. Mentally I feel better about myself."
(Male, 47 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Had money in my pocket again." (Male, 29 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

Approximately two-thirds of those in any of the three Problem Player segments indicated that **having more money was a notable positive change.** Even Non-Problem Past Players (28%) were inclined to note this as the principal positive consequence of stopping VL play.

Additional time for family and friends, and improvements in relationships were noted as positive benefits by approximately one-quarter of Problem Players, especially those who had successfully resolved their problem VL gambling through abstinence (25%). Resolved Past Players were also most inclined to note improvements in **self-esteem, self-confidence and general mental** health (46%). In fact, Resolved Past Players were five times more likely than Unresolved Players to note self-esteem improvements as a positive change (46% versus 9%).

"More money and I felt better about myself because my family said they were proud of me." (Female, 44 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I had more money, better quality time with my friends and family and increased self esteem." (Female, 30 years, Resolved Present Player)

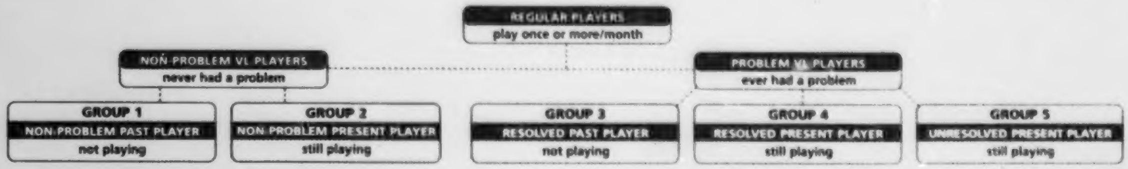
"I had more money and I felt better about myself. I have more self respect now."
(Female, 41 years, Resolved Past Player)

"More money, not fighting at home, less likely to go to bars."
(Male, 52 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I began to like myself again and could look at myself in the mirror and could sleep better at night." (Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I was more sociable with friends and family, had money in my pocket. It didn't control my life anymore. I would plan my schedule around playing and I don't do that now." (Male, 33 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Self esteem, not hurting yourself, no headaches anymore."
(Male, 38 years, Resolved Past Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

"Everything is so much better now. I'm not as nervous and uptight anymore. I get along with my wife better now; the bills are paid off. I get along better at work." (Male, 40 years, Resolved Past Player)

Greater involvement in other activities was noted by a similar percentage of past and present players (≈7% to 11%) as a positive consequence of reduced or terminated play, and likely will contribute to the player's ability to sustain their change in play.

"More money, more time for friends/family, more involvement in other things. All these things were better in my life because I cut down VL play." (Male, 41 years, Resolved Present Player)

"More involved in other activities." (Female, 32 years, Resolved Present Player)

"Have more spending money. Using my time better for exercise and personal fulfillment. Building relationships." (Female, 27 years, Resolved Past Player)

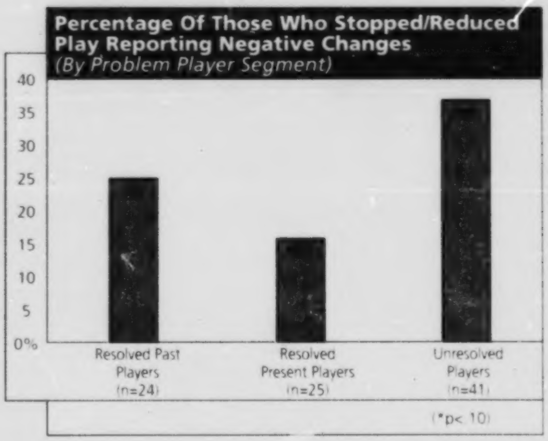
"I had more money and more time to enjoy different activities with my friends and family." (Male, 31 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I have a little more money. I started watching TV a lot more and going to hockey games." (Male, 57 years, Partially Resolved Player)

It is noteworthy that 17% of Unresolved Players reported that they experienced no positive changes when they reduced or stopped playing. This suggests that for a small proportion of those continuing to engage in problem VL gambling, the act of stopping or reducing their involvement offered few positive reinforcements. These adults may require external "rewards" to assist them in eliminating their problem VL behaviour. If they are to be supportive, family, friends, counselors and clinicians will have to assess and recognize those individuals who may require assistance in replacing VL behaviour with something else that will be equally or more rewarding and less problematic.

Undoubtedly, "more cash," less financial difficulty, greater time and involvement with friends and family, improved mental health and self esteem are the benefits typically reported by players. These changes in and of themselves can serve to act as positive reinforcements over time. The key challenge is to provide support to the individual until such time as the benefits begin to come into effect. This will be particularly difficult if escape from financial problems, family situations (i.e., abusive relationships, mental problems) or other stresses were originally motivating the individual to seek solace or respite in VL play. It will be recalled that for 40% of Resolved Past Players and 30% of the Unresolved Players, the onset of problem VL play coincided with significant negative life events such as marital problems, divorce/separation, depression, loneliness/boredom/money problems. For these individuals, it will be necessary to address the precipitating or mitigating factors, as well as their VL play if there is to be successful resolution of their gambling problem.

NEGATIVE CHANGES RESULTING FROM STOPPING/REDUCING PLAY OF VLT'S



Those still engaged in problem VL gambling who have tried to stop are more likely to have experienced some negative change when they stopped or reduced their VL play, especially when compared to the Resolved Present Players (37% versus 16%; p<.10). The primary barrier for players in sustaining any change in their behaviour is **fighting the "constant urge to play.**" Avoiding VLT locations means that those trying to reduce or stop playing are required to make **significant changes to their lifestyle (≈9%).** In some cases, this will entail avoiding friends and family members. Players also report experiencing feelings of **nervousness** and **irritability** or **"crankiness"** (≈9%). **Depression** was specifically mentioned as a negative consequence faced by 8% of Problem Resolved Players who have stopped playing altogether.

It is also noted as difficult to fill in the time previously taken up by video lottery. Thus, some players report **boredom** in response to stopping or reducing play (8%).

"I got bored and missed playing the VLT's. I had to find different things to do."
(Male, 31 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I was bored, too much time to fill. Made me irritable and anxious."
(Male, 58 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I couldn't socialize at the bars. It was impossible." (Male, 38 years, Unresolved Player)

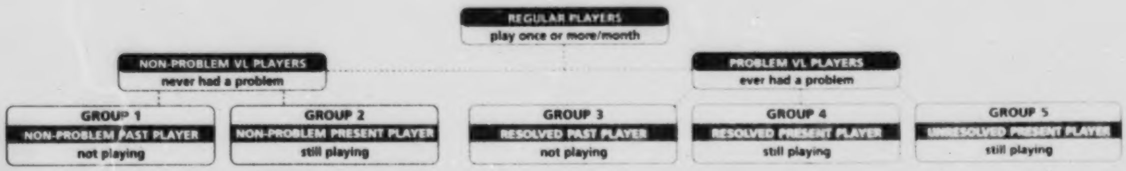
"I can't go to the bars, nervous, irritable, experienced physical symptoms."
(Male, 52 years, Unresolved Player)

"I experienced physical symptoms; a constant urge to play and depression."
(Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I always have a constant urge to play, even though I have reduced play."
(Male, 41 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I still wanted to play. I still feel the need even now." (Male, 31 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I couldn't see friends or family. I became irritable, frustrated and depressed."
(Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

"Everything is so much better now. I'm not as nervous and uptight anymore. I get along with my wife better now; the bills are paid off. I get along better at work." (Male, 40 years, Resolved Past Player)

Greater involvement in other activities was noted by a similar percentage of past and present players (7% to 11%) as a positive consequence of reduced or terminated play, and likely will contribute to the player's ability to sustain their change in play.

"More money, more time for friends/family, more involvement in other things. All these things were better in my life because I cut down VL play." (Male, 41 years, Resolved Present Player)

"More involved in other activities." (Female, 32 years, Resolved Present Player)

"Have more spending money. Using my time better for exercise and personal fulfillment. Building relationships." (Female, 27 years, Resolved Past Player)

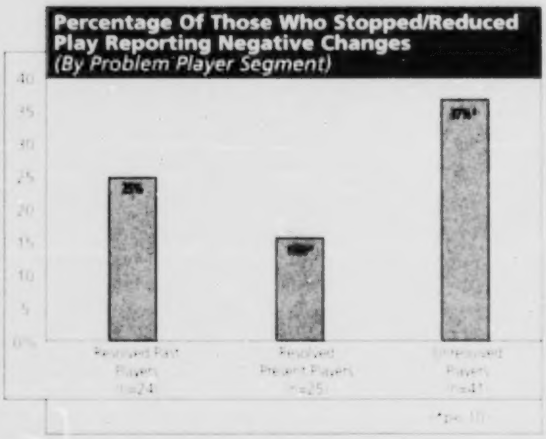
"I had more money and more time to enjoy different activities with my friends and family." (Male, 31 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I have a little more money. I started watching TV a lot more and going to hockey games." (Male, 57 years, Partially Resolved Player)

It is noteworthy that 17% of Unresolved Players reported that they experienced no positive changes when they reduced or stopped playing. This suggests that for a small proportion of those continuing to engage in problem VL gambling, the act of stopping or reducing their involvement offered few positive reinforcements. These adults may require external "rewards" to assist them in eliminating their problem VL behaviour. If they are to be supportive, family, friends, counselors and clinicians will have to assess and recognize those individuals who may require assistance in replacing VL behaviour with something else that will be equally or more rewarding and less problematic.

Undoubtedly, "more cash," less financial difficulty, greater time and involvement with friends and family, improved mental health and self esteem are the benefits typically reported by players. These changes in and of themselves can serve to act as positive reinforcements over time. The key challenge is to provide support to the individual until such time as the benefits begin to come into effect. This will be particularly difficult if escape from financial problems, family situations (i.e., abusive relationships, mental problems) or other stresses were originally motivating the individual to seek solace or respite in VL play. It will be recalled that for 40% of Resolved Past Players and 30% of the Unresolved Players, the onset of problem VL play coincided with significant negative life events such as marital problems, divorce/separation, depression, loneliness/boredom/money problems. For these individuals, it will be necessary to address the precipitating or mitigating factors, as well as their VL play if there is to be successful resolution of their gambling problem.

NEGATIVE CHANGES RESULTING FROM STOPPING/REDUCING PLAY OF VLT'S



Percentage Of Those Who Stopped/Reduced Play Reporting Negative Changes
(By Problem Player Segment)

Those still engaged in problem VL gambling who have tried to stop are more likely to have experienced some negative change when they stopped or reduced their VL play, especially when compared to the Resolved Present Players (37% versus 16%; p<.10). The primary barrier for players in sustaining any change in their behaviour is **fighting the "constant urge to play.**" Avoiding VLT locations means that those trying to reduce or stop playing are required to make **significant changes to their lifestyle (~9%).** In some cases, this will entail avoiding friends and family members. Players also report experiencing feelings of **nervousness** and **irritability** or **"crankiness"** (~9%). **Depression** was specifically mentioned as a negative consequence faced by 8% of Problem Resolved Players who have stopped playing altogether.

It is also noted as difficult to fill in the time previously taken up by video lottery. Thus, some players report **boredom** in response to stopping or reducing play (8%).

"I got bored and missed playing the VLT's. I had to find different things to do."
(Male, 31 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I was bored, too much time to fill. Made me irritable and anxious."
(Male, 58 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I couldn't socialize at the bars. It was impossible." (Male, 38 years, Unresolved Player)

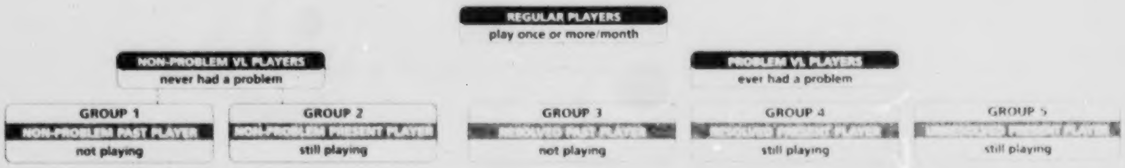
"I can't go to the bars, nervous, irritable, experienced physical symptoms."
(Male, 52 years, Unresolved Player)

"I experienced physical symptoms; a constant urge to play and depression."
(Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I always have a constant urge to play, even though I have reduced play."
(Male, 41 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I still wanted to play. I still feel the need even now." (Male, 31 years, Resolved Present Player)

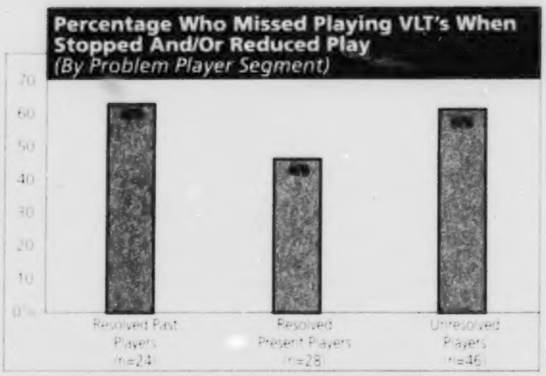
"I couldn't see friends or family. I became irritable, frustrated and depressed."
(Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)



REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

Preparing Problem Players to deal with these potentially negative side effects will be critical to sustaining their commitment to abstain from or reduce play. In extreme cases, treatment to offset depression or anxiety may be warranted. For the most part, identifying alternative pastimes that are reasonable substitutes for the VL activity will be necessary and an essential part of successful strategies to reduce or stop play. Acknowledging the role of lifestyle and family and friends in perpetuating the problem play will also be important in providing the Problem VL Gambler with viable strategies to maintain their conviction to change. It will also be important to identify those aspects that may be beyond the control of the individual such as a spouse or other close family member who is continuing to engage in VL play, the location of VLT's on or near work premises, or the pressure of friends and/or family to keep playing. Regardless, individuals and their family members must be prepared in advance to cope with potentially negative side effects associated with play cessation and reduction.

"MISSED" ASPECT OF REDUCED OR STOPPED VLT PLAY



Not surprisingly, the majority (63%) of those Problem Players who stopped playing VLT's, indicated that they "missed" their involvement in the activity. In fact, many noted that "missing" was an understated representation of their response, as the on-going "urge to play" is extremely compelling. All three Problem Player groups are equally likely to miss playing VLT's. The allure of VLT's is particularly compelling among Resolved Present Players where almost half reported that even reductions in play had a noticeable impact.

For all three Problem Player segments, the most often mentioned aspect players missed about playing VLT's was the **"thrill or rush of playing"** (29% to 33%) and the **"chance it offers to win money"** (25% to 30%).

The Problem Player segments are also equally likely to specifically refer to the allure of the **"physical aspects of play"** such as hitting the stop button; the flashing lights and sounds (15%). It appears that the machines themselves, as well as interaction with the game, are particularly stimulating, exciting and pleasurable for Problem Players.

"The adrenaline rush in playing them, I don't know how to describe it. It was just a rush that made me feel alive." (Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)

"To describe it, I would say the excitement. I was attracted to the colours and the chance of winning. It always seems so close but you can never win."
(Male, 47 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The fun of playing them. The thrill of seeing all fruit or the 7's. A good payout. The suspense." (Female, 53 years, Resolved Present Player)

"The adrenaline rush when your credits would get high or the rush of the thought of winning." (Female, 27 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The entertainment, the sounds of the bells and the excitement of winning." (Male, 35 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Just the act of playing, if that makes any sense. It's relaxing and exciting." (Male, 22 years, Unresolved Player)

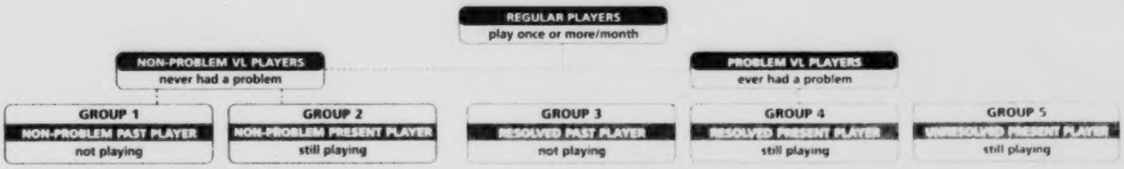
"The flashing lights, the chance of winning my money back. I think that I just put a couple hundred bucks in the machine and now someone else is winning my money." (Male, 47 years, Unresolved Player)

"The lights, the bells, looking at that little screen; bragging about wins. When you win, everyone jumps up and you are the centre of attention. They are excited for you." (Male, 38 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The bells ringing and the pinkish colours of the machine when you get the four corners and all the fruit. It was hypnotizing." (Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

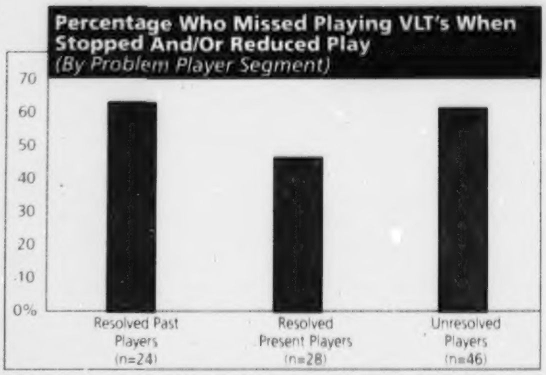
"The sounds of the machine itself just playing, the colour of the bells and fruit baskets. I liked the colours. I was in awe of the machines." (Female, 60 years, Partially Resolved Player)

Almost half or more of all past or present Problem Players note that when stopping or reducing VL play, the activity is greatly missed, at best, or creates a significant void, at worse. While the chance to win money is compelling in and of itself, the truly engaging aspects of play are related to the actual interaction with the machine and the physical and emotional effects of that interaction. The machine itself appears to be satisfying or stimulating the individual in a way that may be lacking or diminished in other parts of their life. In some cases, if not for the accumulating negative consequences of both extreme money and time expenditure, the experience of playing is providing a "pleasurable distraction from an everyday life" (Female, 38 years, Unresolved Player) that is not always exciting or stimulating. Given the appeal of the machines and the physical response of players towards play, it is reasonable to anticipate a withdrawal period. For 30% of Unresolved Players, mere exposure to the machines is the primary trigger for relapsed play and 20% succumb to the internal "urge or craving" to play. Thus, for these Problem Players, external control options (e.g., voluntary exclusion) and avoidance coping strategies (e.g., avoiding VL locations and players, replacing VL with other activities) may be of assistance until the individual has developed alternate or improved skill sets for countering such "urges" or impulsive behaviour on their own.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

Preparing Problem Players to deal with these potentially negative side effects will be critical to sustaining their commitment to abstain from or reduce play. In extreme cases, treatment to offset depression or anxiety may be warranted. For the most part, identifying alternative pastimes that are reasonable substitutes for the VL activity will be necessary and an essential part of successful strategies to reduce or stop play. Acknowledging the role of lifestyle and family and friends in perpetuating the problem play will also be important in providing the Problem VL Gambler with viable strategies to maintain their conviction to change. It will also be important to identify those aspects that may be beyond the control of the individual such as a spouse or other close family member who is continuing to engage in VL play, the location of VLT's on or near work premises, or the pressure of friends and/or family to keep playing. Regardless, individuals and their family members must be prepared in advance to cope with potentially negative side effects associated with play cessation and reduction.

"MISSED" ASPECT OF REDUCED OR STOPPED VLT PLAY



Not surprisingly, the majority (63%) of those Problem Players who stopped playing VLT's, indicated that they "missed" their involvement in the activity. In fact, many noted that "missing" was an understated representation of their response, as the on-going "urge to play" is extremely compelling. All three Problem Player groups are equally likely to miss playing VLT's. The allure of VLT's is particularly compelling among Resolved Present Players where almost half reported that even reductions in play had a noticeable impact.

For all three Problem Player segments, the most often mentioned aspect players missed about playing VLT's was the **"thrill or rush of playing"** (29% to 33%) and the **"chance it offers to win money"** (25% to 30%).

The Problem Player segments are also equally likely to specifically refer to the allure of the **"physical aspects of play"** such as hitting the stop button; the flashing lights and sounds (15%). It appears that the machines themselves, as well as interaction with the game, are particularly stimulating, exciting and pleasurable for Problem Players.

"The adrenaline rush in playing them, I don't know how to describe it. It was just a rush that made me feel alive." (Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)

"To describe it, I would say the excitement. I was attracted to the colours and the chance of winning. It always seems so close but you can never win." (Male, 47 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The fun of playing them. The thrill of seeing all fruit or the 7's. A good payout. The suspense." (Female, 53 years, Resolved Present Player)

"The adrenaline rush when your credits would get high or the rush of the thought of winning." (Female, 27 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The entertainment, the sounds of the bells and the excitement of winning." (Male, 35 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Just the act of playing, if that makes any sense. It's relaxing and exciting." (Male, 22 years, Unresolved Player)

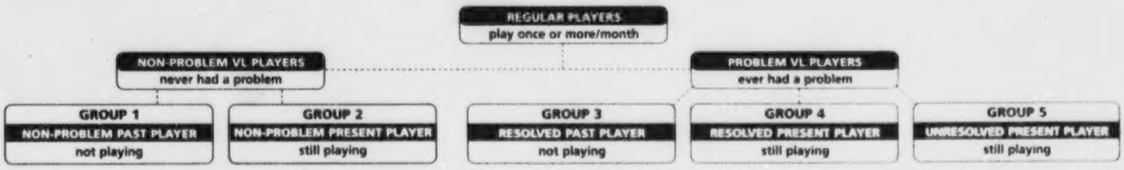
"The flashing lights, the chance of winning my money back. I think that I just put a couple hundred bucks in the machine and now someone else is winning my money." (Male, 47 years, Unresolved Player)

"The lights, the bells, looking at that little screen; bragging about wins. When you win, everyone jumps up and you are the centre of attention. They are excited for you." (Male, 38 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The bells ringing and the pinkish colours of the machine when you get the four corners and all the fruit. It was hypnotizing." (Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

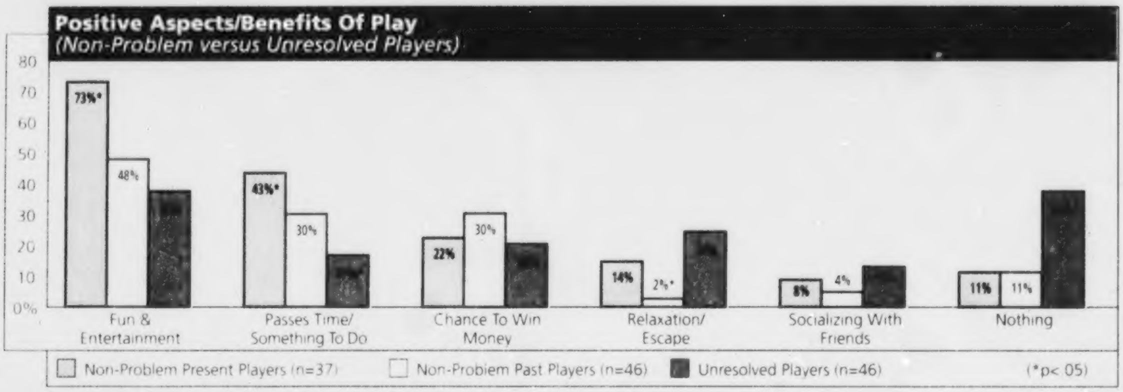
"The sounds of the machine itself just playing, the colour of the bells and fruit baskets. I liked the colours. I was in awe of the machines." (Female, 60 years, Partially Resolved Player)

Almost half or more of all past or present Problem Players note that when stopping or reducing VL play, the activity is greatly missed, at best, or creates a significant void, at worse. While the chance to win money is compelling in and of itself, the truly engaging aspects of play are related to the actual interaction with the machine and the physical and emotional effects of that interaction. The machine itself appears to be satisfying or stimulating the individual in a way that may be lacking or diminished in other parts of their life. In some cases, if not for the accumulating negative consequences of both extreme money and time expenditure, the experience of playing is providing a "pleasurable distraction from an everyday life" (Female, 38 years, Unresolved Player) that is not always exciting or stimulating. Given the appeal of the machines and the physical response of players towards play, it is reasonable to anticipate a withdrawal period. For 30% of Unresolved Players, mere exposure to the machines is the primary trigger for relapsed play and 20% succumb to the internal "urge or craving" to play. Thus, for these Problem Players, external control options (e.g., voluntary exclusion) and avoidance coping strategies (e.g., avoiding VL locations and players, replacing VL with other activities) may be of assistance until the individual has developed alternate or improved skill sets for countering such "urges" or impulsive behaviour on their own.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

MOTIVATIONS FOR PLAY

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF PLAY



Only the Non-Problem Players and current Unresolved Players were questioned on the perceived benefits of playing VLT's. This was undertaken to gain additional insight as to any differences in the motivations between problem versus non-problem play.

Approximately twice as many Non-Problem Present Players (73%) report they derive **fun and entertainment value** from their VL play, as compared to the Unresolved Players (37%) and, to a lesser extent, Non-Problem Past Players who have stopped playing at sometime in the past (48%). In the case of the latter group of Non-Problem Past Players, this result is consistent with their behaviour. However, just over one-third of Unresolved Players, who are all continuing to play the machines, cite **fun and entertainment** as a benefit of their play. A similar proportion indicate that they receive **no benefits** from their play (37%).

Relaxation or escape (24%), **chance to win money** (20%) **passing or filling time** (17%) and **socializing with friends** (13%) are the other most notable benefits Unresolved Players derive from play.

There are no differences between the Unresolved and Non-Problem groups in terms of the perceived benefit of winning money. Surprisingly, **using VL play as a way to pass time is considered to be a benefit by more Non-Problem Players than Unresolved Players (43% versus 17%).** This is significant given that past research has tended to find "playing to fill time" is often associated with problem play. It may be that initially playing for this reason places individuals at greater risk for subsequently developing problems, or there may be interpretive differences between playing to "fill short periods of time" between other activities versus playing for "something to do" in the absence of other activities. However, once it becomes a problem, players have a greater tendency to plan their play, deliberately scheduling or allotting time for the activity. Therefore, "playing to fill time" is not as relevant since the activity itself has now become part of the individual's repertoire. (Section 3.0 - Problem VL Gamblers' Analysis; 1997/98 NS Video Lottery Players' Survey, Focal Research, 1998)

Perceived Benefits From Non-Problem Players

"To pass the time and for entertainment to see if you can win some money." (Male, 35 years, Non-Problem Present Player)

"Cheap entertainment. It passes the time away." (Male, 23 years, Non-Problem Present Player)

"A fun part of socializing with friends." (Male, 38 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"It filled in some time while I was waiting for my bowling team." (Male, 77 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"Good for a few minutes of entertainment, maybe win a few bucks." (Male, 32 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

Perceived Benefits From Unresolved Players

"I get relaxation and fun, it calms me down and helps me to forget my troubles." (Male, 40 years, Unresolved Player)

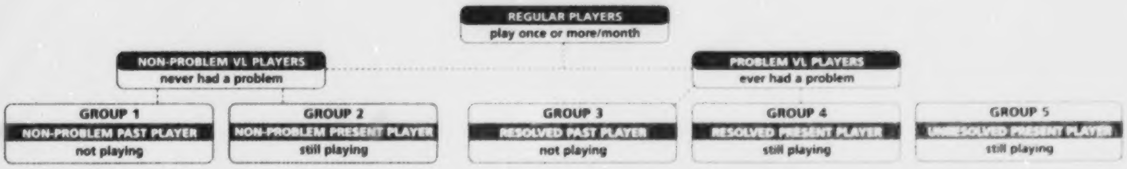
"Basically, to be lost (quiet time), to be by myself not socializing with other people." (Female, 46 years, Unresolved Player)

"Absolutely nothing except I enjoy it. It's exciting, I like the noises from the machines." (Female, 61 years, Unresolved Player)

"It was an escape to get out, relaxation and solitude." (Female, 37 years, Unresolved Player)

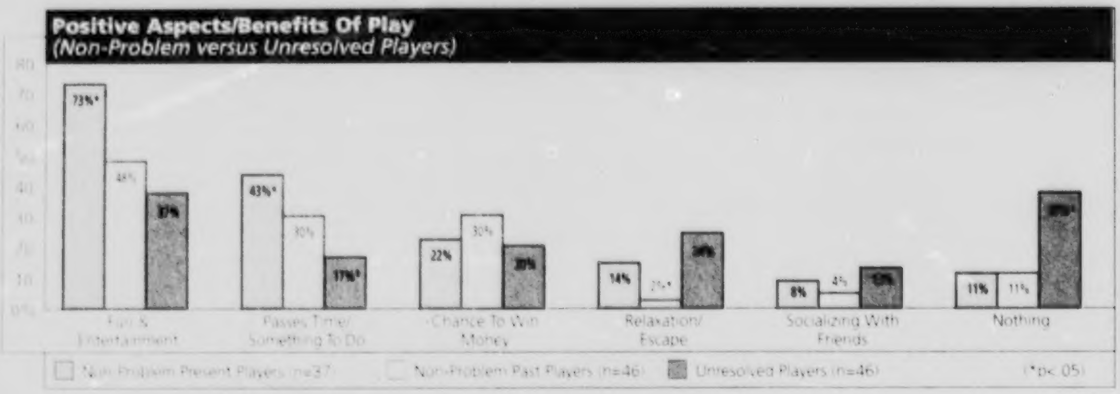
"There are no positive things, the government is the only winner." (Male, 39 years, Unresolved Player)

Despite the fact that only one-third of Unresolved Players indicate they derive entertainment value from VL games, and a further 37% report gaining no benefits from their play, these adults are continuing to play. The primary benefits for remaining players tend to centre on the impact of the machines on players' arousal levels. In some cases, the games stimulate and heighten players' arousal levels. For others, interaction with the machines is calming and relaxing and provides an opportunity for players to escape from their problems or worries. For these adults, VL play may offer temporary respite. Any assistance, communications materials or interventions must take into consideration


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

MOTIVATIONS FOR PLAY

PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF PLAY


Positive Aspects/Benefits Of Play
(Non-Problem versus Unresolved Players)

Only the Non-Problem Players and current Unresolved Players were questioned on the perceived benefits of playing VLT's. This was undertaken to gain additional insight as to any differences in the motivations between problem versus non-problem play.

Approximately twice as many Non-Problem Present Players (73%) report they derive **fun and entertainment value** from their VL play, as compared to the Unresolved Players (37%) and, to a lesser extent, Non-Problem Past Players who have stopped playing at sometime in the past (48%). In the case of the latter group of Non-Problem Past Players, this result is consistent with their behaviour. However, just over one-third of Unresolved Players, who are all continuing to play the machines, cite **fun and entertainment** as a benefit of their play. A similar proportion indicate that they receive **no benefits** from their play (37%).

Relaxation or escape (24%), **chance to win money** (20%) **passing or filling time** (17%) and **socializing with friends** (13%) are the other most notable benefits Unresolved Players derive from play.

There are no differences between the Unresolved and Non-Problem groups in terms of the perceived benefit of winning money. Surprisingly, **using VL play as a way to pass time is considered to be a benefit by more Non-Problem Players than Unresolved Players (43% versus 17%).** This is significant given that past research has tended to find "playing to fill time" is often associated with problem play. It may be that initially playing for this reason places individuals at greater risk for subsequently developing problems, or there may be interpretive differences between playing to "fill short periods of time" between other activities versus playing for "something to do" in the absence of other activities. However, once it becomes a problem, players have a greater tendency to plan their play, deliberately scheduling or allotting time for the activity. Therefore, "playing to fill time" is not as relevant since the activity itself has now become part of the individual's repertoire. (Section 3.0 - Problem VL Gamblers' Analysis; 1997/98 NS Video Lottery Players' Survey, Focal Research, 1998)

Perceived Benefits From Non-Problem Players

"To pass the time and for entertainment to see if you can win some money."
(Male, 35 years, Non-Problem Present Player)

"Cheap entertainment. It passes the time away." (Male, 23 years, Non-Problem Present Player)

"A fun part of socializing with friends." (Male, 38 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"It filled in some time while I was waiting for my bowling team."
(Male, 77 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"Good for a few minutes of entertainment, maybe win a few bucks."
(Male, 32 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

Perceived Benefits From Unresolved Players

"I get relaxation and fun, it calms me down and helps me to forget my troubles."
(Male, 40 years, Unresolved Player)

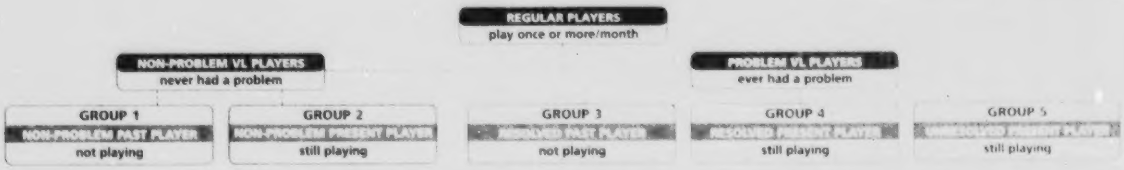
"Basically, to be lost (quiet time), to be by myself not socializing with other people." (Female, 46 years, Unresolved Player)

"Absolutely nothing except I enjoy it. It's exciting, I like the noises from the machines." (Female, 61 years, Unresolved Player)

"It was an escape to get out, relaxation and solitude."
(Female, 37 years, Unresolved Player)

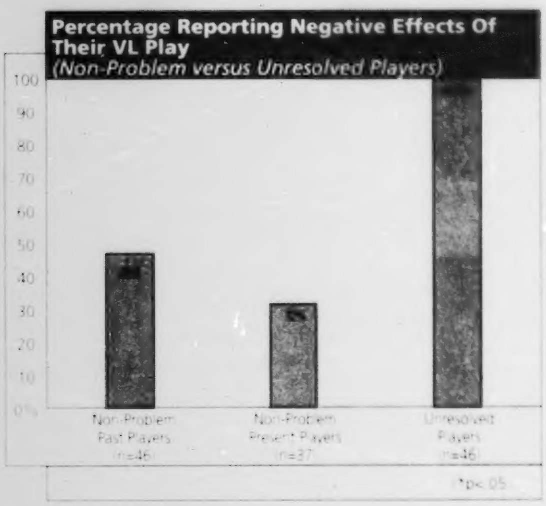
"There are no positive things, the government is the only winner."
(Male, 39 years, Unresolved Player)

Despite the fact that only one-third of Unresolved Players indicate they derive entertainment value from VL games, and a further 37% report gaining no benefits from their play, these adults are continuing to play. The primary benefits for remaining players tend to centre on the impact of the machines on players' arousal levels. In some cases, the games stimulate and heighten players' arousal levels. For others, interaction with the machines is calming and relaxing and provides an opportunity for players to escape from their problems or worries. For these adults, VL play may offer temporary respite. Any assistance, communications materials or interventions must take into consideration


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

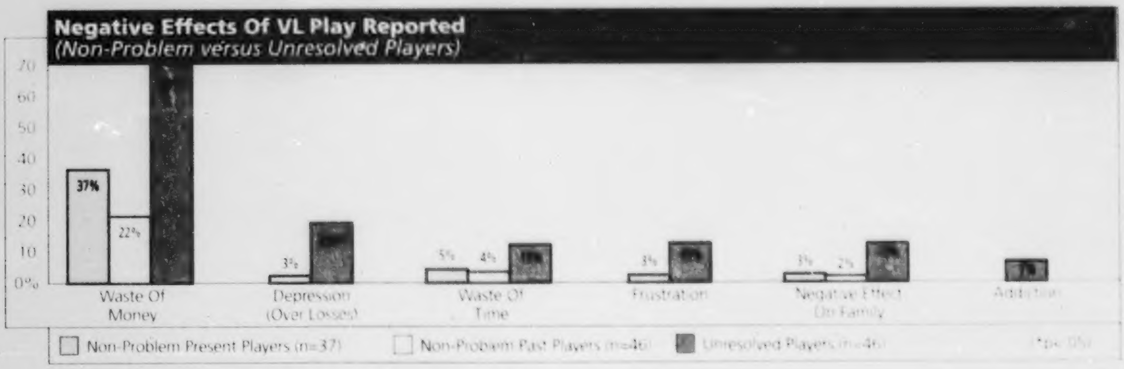
the principal benefits a Problem Player is currently deriving from play in order to customize a strategy that will meet the needs of the Problem Player. For example, entertainment players will require alternative options for satisfying this drive; those benefiting from the calming "escapism" will require new and different means of achieving this effect outside of VLT's or require resolution of the situations from which they are trying to "escape."

PERCEIVED NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF PLAY


Percentage Reporting Negative Effects Of Their VL Play
(Non-Problem versus Unresolved Players)

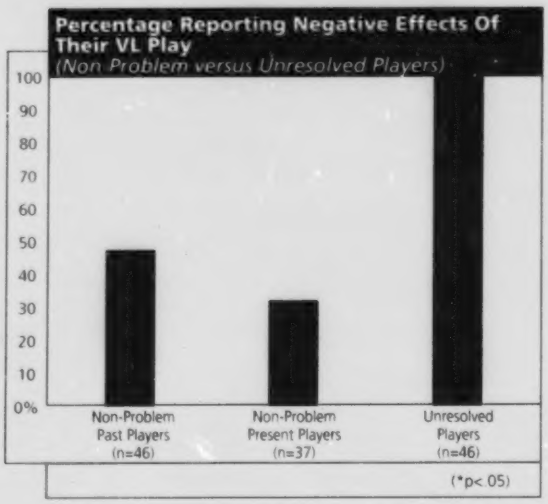
As expected, 100% of those Unresolved Players asked to report on the negative effects of play described at least one negative outcome, as compared to approximately one-half (48%) of Non-Problem Past Players and only 30% of Non-Problem Present Players.

Again, the **financial impact of play** has a more profound negative effect on the Unresolved Players, to the extent that 1 out of 5 note experiencing **depression** over their play, primarily in response to losses. **To a lesser extent frustration** (13%), **negative effects on family** (13%) and **"waste of time"** (13%) are also noted primarily among Unresolved Players as a consequence of play.


Negative Effects Of VL Play Reported
(Non-Problem versus Unresolved Players)

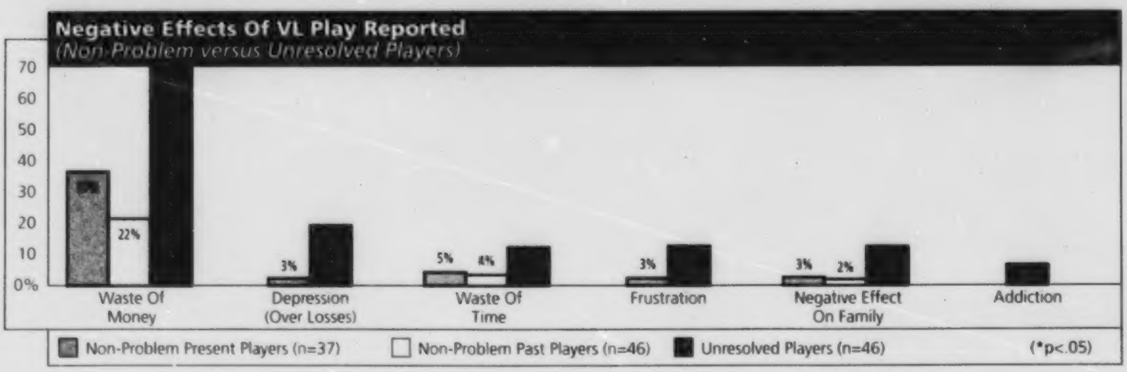
the principal benefits a Problem Player is currently deriving from play in order to customize a strategy that will meet the needs of the Problem Player. For example, entertainment players will require alternative options for satisfying this drive; those benefiting from the calming "escapism" will require new and different means of achieving this effect outside of VLT's or require resolution of the situations from which they are trying to "escape."

PERCEIVED NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF PLAY



As expected, 100% of those Unresolved Players asked to report on the negative effects of play described at least one negative outcome, as compared to approximately one-half (48%) of Non-Problem Past Players and only 30% of Non-Problem Present Players.

Again, the **financial impact of play** has a more profound negative effect on the Unresolved Players, to the extent that 1 out of 5 note experiencing **depression** over their play, primarily in response to losses. **To a lesser extent frustration** (13%), **negative effects on family** (13%) and **"waste of time"** (13%) are also noted primarily among Unresolved Players as a consequence of play.



REPORTED NEGATIVE EFFECTS FROM NON-PROBLEM PLAYERS

"Sometimes I would get bored because I was used to playing, also the money I wasted had a negative effect on me." (Male, 32 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"I felt I was throwing money away." (Male, 54 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"I saw enough negative things other players were going through that it made me want to stop. For example, people in debt, money problems."
(Male, 51 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"Seeing people spending too much money. Too much cigarette smoke."
(Female, 38 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

"Nothing really. I don't think it's good for the family. It makes you stay longer at the bar and drink and spend more." (Male, 34 years, Non-Problem Past Player)

REPORTED NEGATIVE EFFECTS FROM UNRESOLVED PLAYERS

"Physically - lack of sleep, tired, stress. Financially - loss of large amounts of money. Emotionally - depression, anger, almost broke up my marriage."
(Male, 67 years, Unresolved Player)

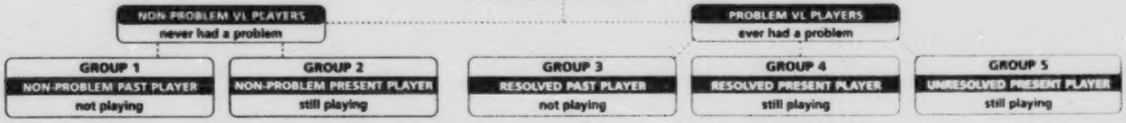
"I became depressed if I didn't win, more irritable. Compulsion to keep playing and trying to win." (Male, 54 years, Unresolved Player)

"I don't win so I get mad at myself for playing and losing money. I'm diabetic and it is stressful when I don't win. The 'machine won,' you didn't beat it. Really nothing to do with the money, it's about me against the machine."
(Male, 51 years, Unresolved Player)

"Loss of money, loss of time with family and hard on my nerves."
(Male, 39 years, Unresolved Player)

"The money, the lack of. I spend a lot of money and have regrets when I don't cash out. I regret spending the time and money there."
(Female, 61 years, Unresolved Player)

"Losing money. Guilt!!" (Female, 39 years, Unresolved Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

Not surprisingly, those Problem Players who have been unable to resolve their VL gambling report significantly greater negative effects from play than the Non-Problem Players. Clearly, any support or efforts to assist these players will have to consist, in part, of addressing these specific and diverse negative impacts. While financial stress or difficulty will likely be the common problem across all players, there will be distinct differences in other specific negative impacts experienced. For example, those who have developed depression will require markedly different interventions and support strategies than those who are manifesting anger and frustration over their play. Likewise, for those reporting negative effects on family, treatment and/or service provision may be more effective if remedial action is targeted towards and includes family members.

As noted earlier, by determining both the benefits problem players derive from VL gambling and the negative effects or consequences experienced as a result of play, it will be possible to ensure programs or support services incorporate these factors in customizing the most effective approach on a per "client" basis. In terms of harm minimization and preventative measures, identifying and communicating high-risk motivations for play may forewarn potential Problem Players.

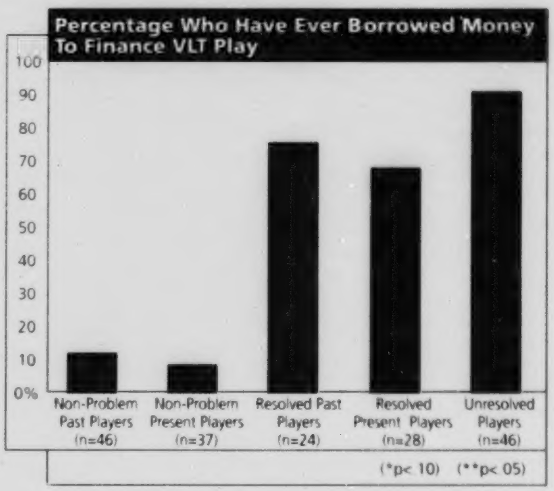
FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF PLAY

DEBT ACCUMULATION/REPAYMENT

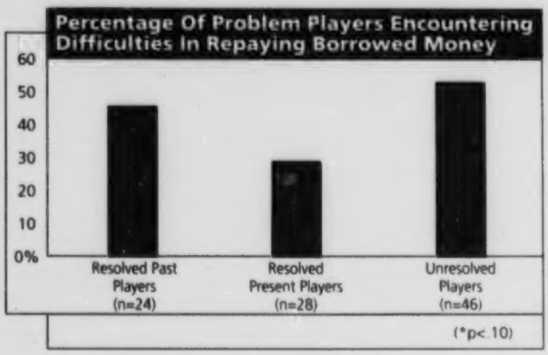
The majority (≈90%) of Non-Problem Players (past and present) have never accessed any sources beyond "cash in-pocket" entertainment funds in order to finance their VLT play. When they have done so, they have primarily borrowed insignificant amounts from friends or family members (5%) or household money (2%). Virtually none of these individuals reported any difficulties in repaying borrowed money.

Conversely, the majority (68% to 91%) of those identified as past or present Problem VL Players have accumulated debt playing the machines.

Percentage Who Have Ever Borrowed Money To Finance VLT Play



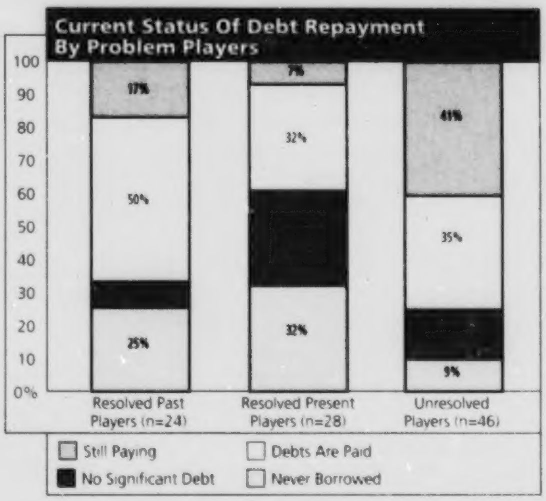
(*p<.10) (**p<.05)

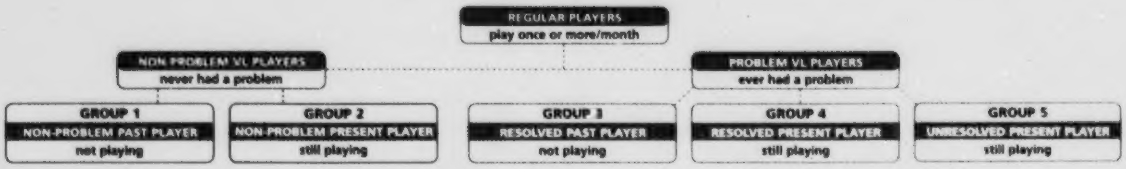


Compared to Resolved Past Players (29%), Unresolved Players (52%) report higher levels of difficulty in repaying accrued debts. Furthermore, 41% of Unresolved Players are still in the process of paying off VLT debts versus only 7% of Resolved Present Players.

For the most part, it appears that those Problem Players who report they have been able to manage their VL gambling (Resolved Present Players) are more inclined to have avoided financing their play by borrowing money (61%), or to have encountered any difficulties in repaying any borrowed funds (29%). In fact, 90% of Resolved Present Players who have borrowed money have now cleared all debts associated with their VL play. Only 7% are still paying off any borrowed or owed money.

In contrast, 67% of those who resolved their VL problems through abstinence rather than controlled play (Resolved Past Players), indicate that they had accrued significant debt from their VL play, with approximately two-thirds of these individuals (46% of all Resolved Past Players) having encountered difficulties in repaying borrowed funds. **Thus, it appears that the level of financial strain caused by the VL gambling is associated with the adoption of an abstinence versus controlled play approach to problem resolution.** Currently, only 17% (n=4) of Resolved Past Players are still paying off any VLT debts. Two of these four Resolved Past Players have only stopped playing within the last three months.




REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

Not surprisingly, those Problem Players who have been unable to resolve their VL gambling report significantly greater negative effects from play than the Non-Problem Players. Clearly, any support or efforts to assist these players will have to consist, in part, of addressing these specific and diverse negative impacts. While financial stress or difficulty will likely be the common problem across all players, there will be distinct differences in other specific negative impacts experienced. For example, those who have developed depression will require markedly different interventions and support strategies than those who are manifesting anger and frustration over their play. Likewise, for those reporting negative effects on family, treatment and/or service provision may be more effective if remedial action is targeted towards and includes family members.

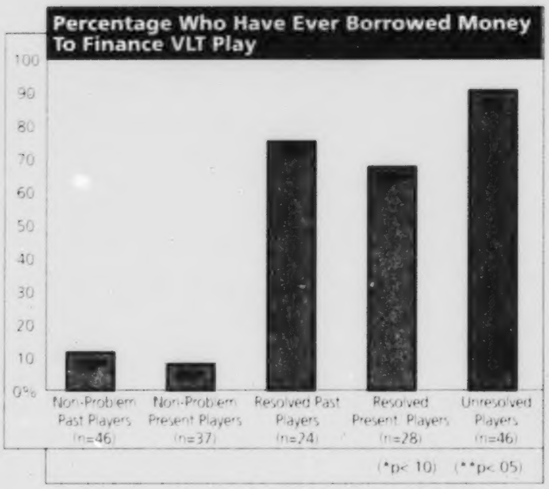
As noted earlier, by determining both the benefits problem players derive from VL gambling and the negative effects or consequences experienced as a result of play, it will be possible to ensure programs or support services incorporate these factors in customizing the most effective approach on a per "client" basis. In terms of harm minimization and preventative measures, identifying and communicating high-risk motivations for play may forewarn potential Problem Players.

FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF PLAY

DEBT ACCUMULATION/REPAYMENT

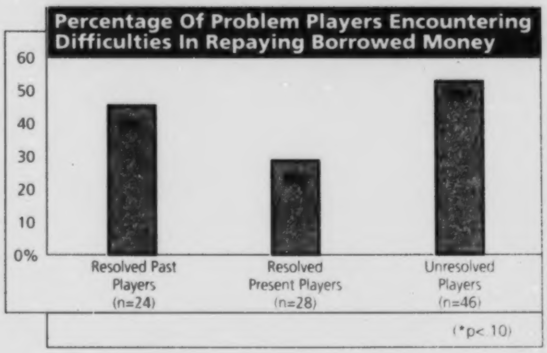
The majority (≈90%) of Non-Problem Players (past and present) have never accessed any sources beyond "cash in-pocket" entertainment funds in order to finance their VLT play. When they have done so, they have primarily borrowed insignificant amounts from friends or family members (5%) or household money (2%). Virtually none of these individuals reported any difficulties in repaying borrowed money.

Conversely, the majority (68% to 91%) of those identified as past or present Problem VL Players have accumulated debt playing the machines.



Percentage Who Have Ever Borrowed Money To Finance VLT Play

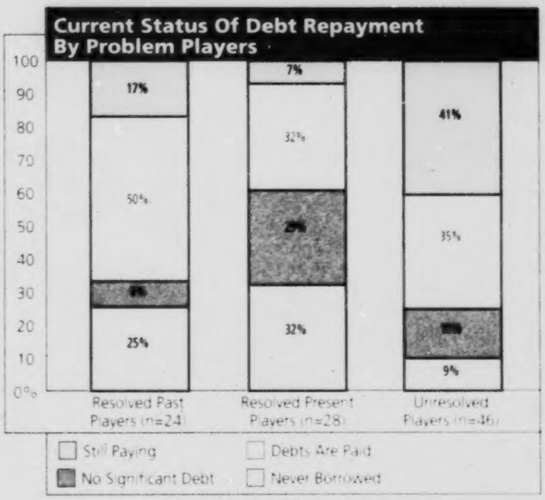
(*p<.10) (**p<.05)



Percentage Of Problem Players Encountering Difficulties In Repaying Borrowed Money

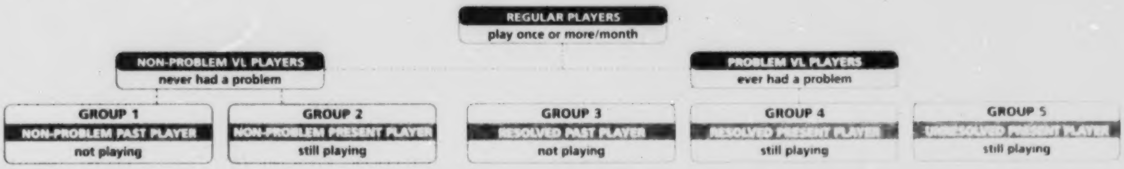
Compared to Resolved Past Players (29%), Unresolved Players (52%) report higher levels of difficulty in repaying accrued debts. Furthermore, 41% of Unresolved Players are still in the process of paying off VLT debts versus only 7% of Resolved Present Players.

For the most part, it appears that those Problem Players who report they have been able to manage their VL gambling (Resolved Present Players) are more inclined to have avoided financing their play by borrowing money (61%), or to have encountered any difficulties in repaying any borrowed funds (29%). In fact, 90% of Resolved Present Players who have borrowed money have now cleared all debts associated with their VL play. Only 7% are still paying off any borrowed or owed money.



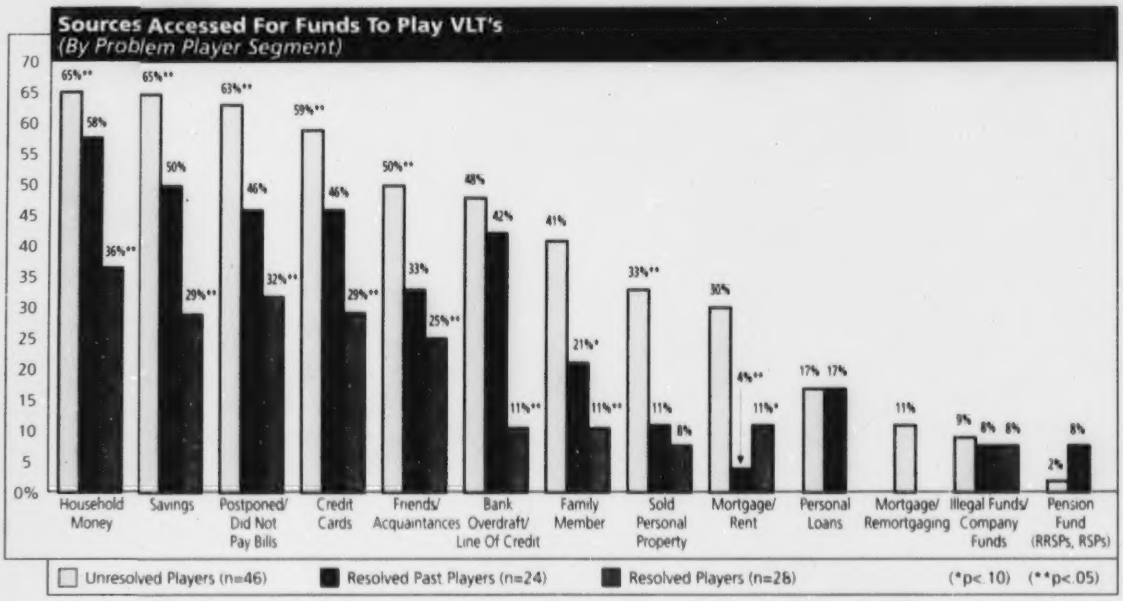
Current Status Of Debt Repayment By Problem Players

In contrast, 67% of those who resolved their VL problems through abstinence rather than controlled play (Resolved Past Players), indicate that they had accrued significant debt from their VL play, with approximately two-thirds of these individuals (46% of all Resolved Past Players) having encountered difficulties in repaying borrowed funds. **Thus, it appears that the level of financial strain caused by the VL gambling is associated with the adoption of an abstinence versus controlled play approach to problem resolution.** Currently, only 17% (n=4) of Resolved Past Players are still paying off any VLT debts. Two of these four Resolved Past Players have only stopped playing within the last three months.



REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

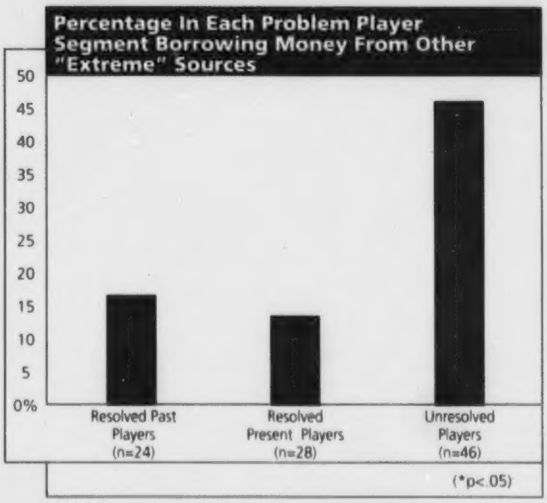
SOURCES FOR VLT FUNDS


Sources Accessed For Funds To Play VLT's
(By Problem Player Segment)

On average, Unresolved Players (4.9) and Resolved Past Players (3.5) have accessed significantly more sources to finance their VL play than Resolved Present Players (2.0).

Comparatively, those who have resolved their VL problem and are continuing to play the machines (Resolved Present Players) are less likely than Unresolved Players to have used almost all of the sources measured. When they have borrowed, household money (36%), savings (29%), credit cards (29%), postponement of bills (32%) and friends or acquaintances (25%) were the principal sources of additional funds. Resolved Present Players were also least likely to have used "bank" sources such as loans (0%), overdrafts or lines of credit (11%).

It is the Unresolved Problem Player who is most inclined to have accessed the majority of sources measured. Similar to Resolved Past Players, those who are continuing to play with problems (Unresolved Players) are about twice as likely as those playing without problems (Resolved Present Players) to have used household money (65%) and savings (65%) to finance their play. The vast majority of Unresolved Players have postponed or missed bill payments (63%) and ran up credit card debt (59%) to service their play. For approximately 61% of those playing with problems, friends and acquaintances (50%) and family (41%) are also key resources for VL gambling funds. **The use of these personal, informal loans are significantly higher for those who are continuing to play with a problem versus those who have resolved their problem, suggesting "bail-outs" or loans by friends or family may be facilitating the individual's on-going involvement in problem VL gambling.**



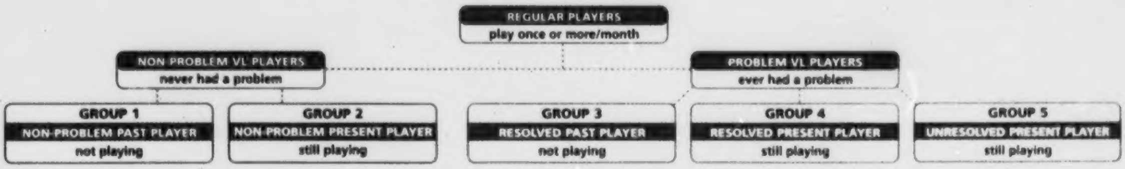
Percentage In Each Problem Player Segment Borrowing Money From Other "Extreme" Sources

Unresolved Players are also approximately three times more likely than those who have resolved their problem VL play to have accessed more extreme sources to offset VLT debts. These sources consist of selling off personal property (33% versus (8% to 11%), using mortgage or rent payments (30% versus (4% to 11%), mortgaging or remortgaging their homes (11% versus 0%) and getting personal bank loans (17%). It should be noted that the Resolved Past Players were just as likely as Unresolved Problem Players to use bank loans (17%). In fact, almost half of all Resolved Past Players who got personal loans from the bank also report selling off personal property.

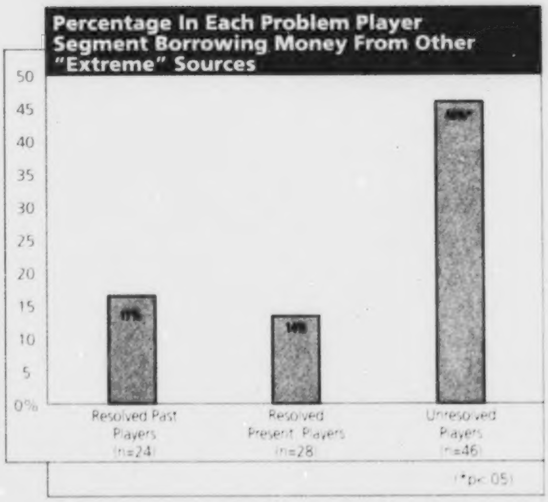
Undoubtedly, one of the most distinguishing factors between problem and non-problem play is the degree of debt or financial strain experienced as a consequence of the player's involvement with video lottery. In fact, as noted earlier, financial difficulty is the primary trigger for players in both problem recognition and resolution. It appears that the degree of financial debt incurred is also related to adoption of an abstinence versus controlled play strategy. Comparatively, those Problem Players who are able to successfully manage their VL play report having accessed fewer sources for VL money, are less inclined to have incurred significant debts associated with their VL play or to have had difficulty in repaying borrowed funds. These Resolved Present Players are more likely to have juggled household funds, savings and available credit than to have had to undertake more extreme actions to raise money. They are also least likely to be indebted to friends or family.

Conversely, Resolved Past Players adopting an abstinence strategy have, on average, accessed more sources for funds, accrued more significant amounts of debt and are more likely to report having encountered difficulties in repaying borrowed money.

The primary differences between the Resolved Past Players and those who have not yet resolved their problem play (Unresolved Players) is the greater tendency for the Unresolved Players to use informal sources such as friends and family for borrowing and to resort to more extreme measures such as mortgaging/remortgaging, use of rent payments and selling of personal property. It appears that friends' and families' financial support may be facilitating continued or on-going play by the Unresolved Players. It is unclear as to whether the Resolved Present Players had less access to informal sources for borrowing or were less inclined to use these resources. Regardless, those who report resolution of their problem VL gambling were significantly less likely to have ever accessed friends or family for financial assistance or borrowing related to VLT play.



REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

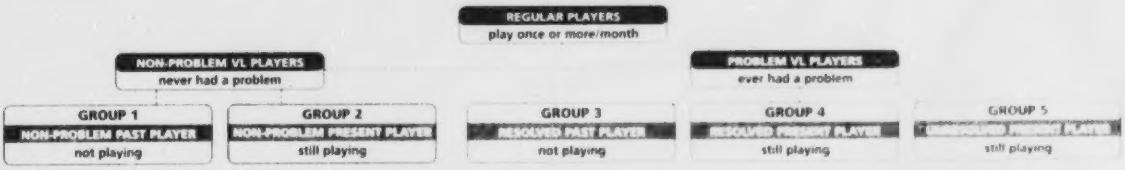

Percentage In Each Problem Player Segment Borrowing Money From Other "Extreme" Sources

Unresolved Players are also approximately three times more likely than those who have resolved their problem VL play to have accessed more extreme sources to offset VLT debts. These sources consist of selling off personal property (33% versus (8% to 11%), using mortgage or rent payments (30% versus (4% to 11%), mortgaging or remortgaging their homes (11% versus 0%) and getting personal bank loans (17%). It should be noted that the Resolved Past Players were just as likely as Unresolved Problem Players to use bank loans (17%). In fact, almost half of all Resolved Past Players who got personal loans from the bank also report selling off personal property.

Undoubtedly, one of the most distinguishing factors between problem and non-problem play is the degree of debt or financial strain experienced as a consequence of the player's involvement with video lottery. In fact, as noted earlier, financial difficulty is the primary trigger for players in both problem recognition and resolution. It appears that the degree of financial debt incurred is also related to adoption of an abstinence versus controlled play strategy. Comparatively, those Problem Players who are able to successfully manage their VL play report having accessed fewer sources for VL money, are less inclined to have incurred significant debts associated with their VL play or to have had difficulty in repaying borrowed funds. These Resolved Present Players are more likely to have juggled household funds, savings and available credit than to have had to undertake more extreme actions to raise money. They are also least likely to be indebted to friends or family.

Conversely, Resolved Past Players adopting an abstinence strategy have, on average, accessed more sources for funds, accrued more significant amounts of debt and are more likely to report having encountered difficulties in repaying borrowed money.

The primary differences between the Resolved Past Players and those who have not yet resolved their problem play (Unresolved Players) is the greater tendency for the Unresolved Players to use informal sources such as friends and family for borrowing and to resort to more extreme measures such as mortgaging/remortgaging, use of rent payments and selling of personal property. It appears that friends' and families' financial support may be facilitating continued or on-going play by the Unresolved Players. It is unclear as to whether the Resolved Present Players had less access to informal sources for borrowing or were less inclined to use these resources. Regardless, those who report resolution of their problem VL gambling were significantly less likely to have ever accessed friends or family for financial assistance or borrowing related to VLT play.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

Not only are the Unresolved Players continuing to engage in VL play at substantially higher expenditure levels than other players, 41% are still in the process of trying to pay off accumulated VL debt. Interestingly, a similar proportion (39%) report they have had no difficulties (as yet) in repaying borrowed funds. This suggests that there may be a group of Problem Players for whom a controlled play approach may be viable, whereas an abstinence strategy may be necessary for those with less control in response to VLT's and the highest accrued VL debt.

In general, it appears that those past and present players reporting the most severe problems with their VL gambling, also had greater access to and/or use of a wider variety of financial resources to fund their play. Thus, the degree of a VL problem may also be related, to some extent, to the *ability of a player* to acquire additional money for play.

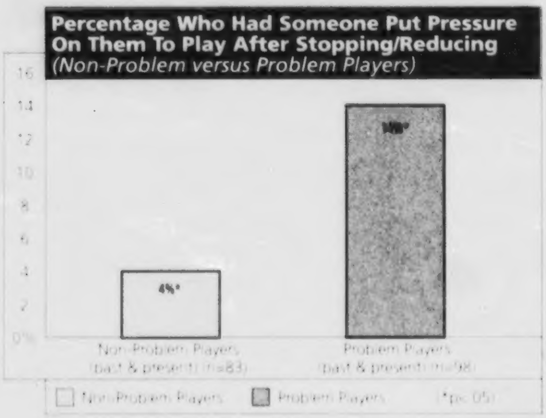
ROLE OF OTHERS (FRIENDS & FAMILY)

PRESSURE TO CONTINUE/RESUME PLAY

There were no significant differences in responses regarding pressure or encouragement to play VL games within the Non-Problem Players segments or Problem Players segments. Therefore, the Non-Problem Players (past and present) were combined for comparison to Problem Players (past and present).

Problem Players, regardless of whether they have successfully resolved their problem or not, are more inclined than Non-Problem Players to report having experienced pressure by others to resume play after they have stopped and/or reduced play (p<.05). Pressure to play is almost exclusively attributed to friends by Problem Players (12%), whereas Non-Problem Players are most inclined to be encouraged to play by family members (4%).

Pressure from a spouse or partner is only noted by 2% of all Problem Players, however, in those cases, the reported influence exerted by the spouse is extremely difficult for players to resist.

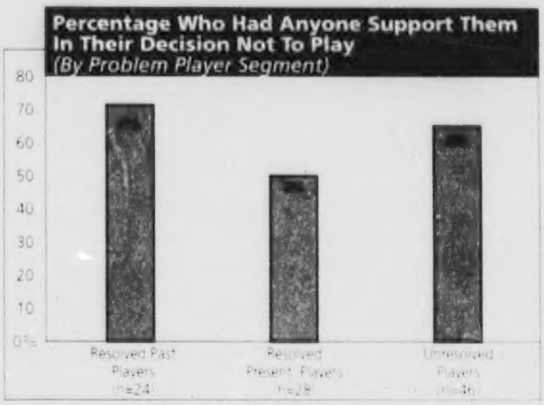

Percentage Who Had Someone Put Pressure On Them To Play After Stopping/Reducing
(Non-Problem versus Problem Players)

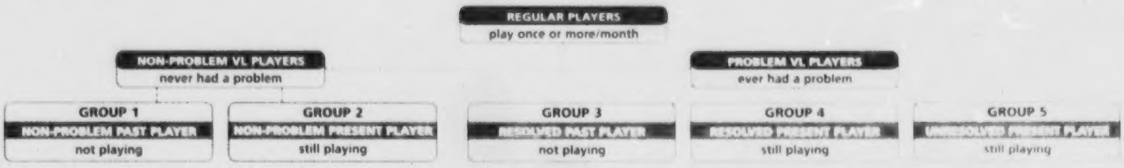
Pressure by friends to resume previous play levels is not as persuasive as spousal influence, yet two-thirds of those reporting any pressure by friends indicate it is at least somewhat influential. **Problem Players need to be forewarned and prepared to resist or avoid pressure to play by friends or family.** Although only a minority of Problem Players is affected, family and other support personnel should be advised to acknowledge and recognize the mitigating effects of peer pressure and identify ways of countering such influence.

SUPPORT TO STOP/REDUCE VL PLAY

Essentially, none of the Non-Problem Players reported that anyone specifically assisted them in their decision to reduce or stop playing VLT's. This likely reflects the lack of negative impact engendered by their play and the fact that they did not require any support to stop and/or reduce their VL gambling. Conversely, approximately half to three-quarters of past and present Problem Players indicated that at least one other person was supportive of their decision to reduce or stop playing VLT's. **Therefore, it appears that the Unresolved Players are just as likely as the Resolved Present Players to have access to support. However, there are some distinctive differences in the nature and perceived effectiveness of the support received among the Resolved Present Players and the Unresolved Players.**

Although the differences are only significant at the 85% confidence level, preliminary evidence suggests that the Resolved Present Players (who continue to play) were less likely to require and/or receive support than the Resolved Past Players (who stopped playing) (50% versus 71%; p<.15). Resolved Present Players receiving help or encouragement (n=14), 64% noted it was received exclusively from a spouse or partner. This represents almost one-third (32%) of all Resolved Present Players. In contrast, almost half of the Resolved Past Players mentioned one or more sources of support beyond their spouse or partner. This result is certainly consistent with other findings which profile the Resolved Present Players as being less severely impacted by problem VL gambling and better able to manage their play. Thus, Resolved Present Players are less needy of external/outside support or constraints on play.


Percentage Who Had Anyone Support Them In Their Decision Not To Play
(By Problem Player Segment)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

Not only are the Unresolved Players continuing to engage in VL play at substantially higher expenditure levels than other players, 41% are still in the process of trying to pay off accumulated VL debt. Interestingly, a similar proportion (39%) report they have had no difficulties (as yet) in repaying borrowed funds. This suggests that there may be a group of Problem Players for whom a controlled play approach may be viable, whereas an abstinence strategy may be necessary for those with less control in response to VLT's and the highest accrued VL debt.

In general, it appears that those past and present players reporting the most severe problems with their VL gambling, also had greater access to and/or use of a wider variety of financial resources to fund their play. Thus, the degree of a VL problem may also be related, to some extent, to the *ability of a player* to acquire additional money for play.

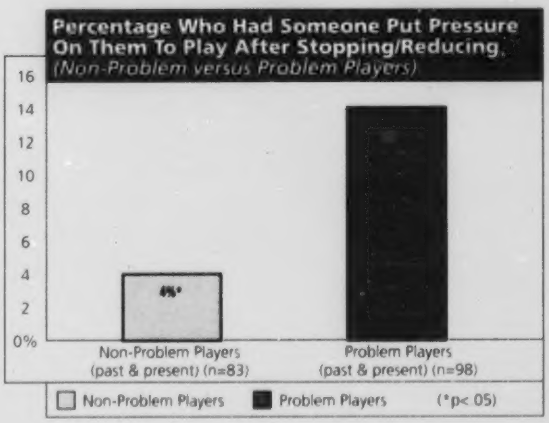
ROLE OF OTHERS (FRIENDS & FAMILY)

PRESSURE TO CONTINUE/RESUME PLAY

There were no significant differences in responses regarding pressure or encouragement to play VL games within the Non-Problem Players segments or Problem Players segments. Therefore, the Non-Problem Players (past and present) were combined for comparison to Problem Players (past and present).

Problem Players, regardless of whether they have successfully resolved their problem or not, are more inclined than Non-Problem Players to report having experienced pressure by others to resume play after they have stopped and/or reduced play (p<.05). Pressure to play is almost exclusively attributed to friends by Problem Players (12%), whereas Non-Problem Players are most inclined to be encouraged to play by family members (≈4%).

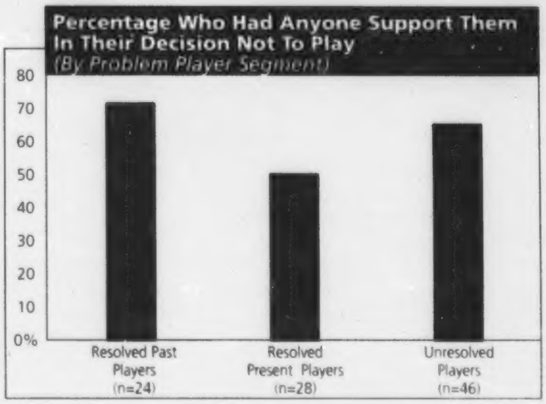
Pressure from a spouse or partner is only noted by 2% of all Problem Players, however, in those cases, the reported influence exerted by the spouse is extremely difficult for players to resist.


Percentage Who Had Someone Put Pressure On Them To Play After Stopping/Reducing
(Non-Problem versus Problem Players)

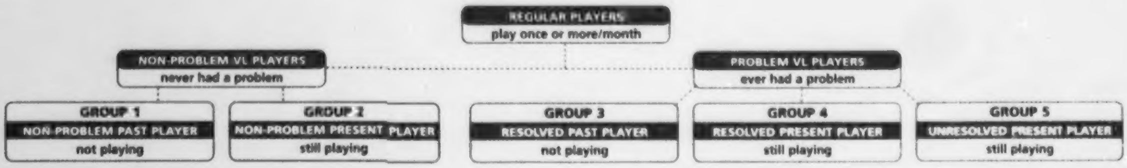
Pressure by friends to resume previous play levels is not as persuasive as spousal influence, yet two-thirds of those reporting any pressure by friends indicate it is at least somewhat influential. **Problem Players need to be forewarned and prepared to resist or avoid pressure to play by friends or family.** Although only a minority of Problem Players is affected, family and other support personnel should be advised to acknowledge and recognize the mitigating effects of peer pressure and identify ways of countering such influence.

SUPPORT TO STOP/REDUCE VL PLAY

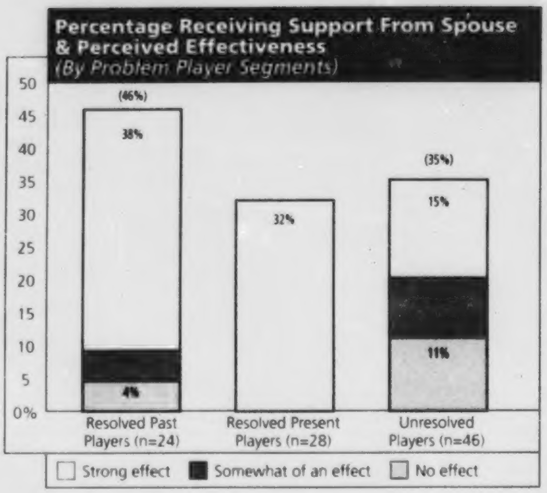
Essentially, none of the Non-Problem Players reported that anyone specifically assisted them in their decision to reduce or stop playing VLT's. This likely reflects the lack of negative impact engendered by their play and the fact that they did not require any support to stop and/or reduce their VL gambling. Conversely, approximately half to three-quarters of past and present Problem Players indicated that at least one other person was supportive of their decision to reduce or stop playing VLT's. **Therefore, it appears that the Unresolved Players are just as likely as the Resolved Present Players to have access to support. However, there are some distinctive differences in the nature and perceived effectiveness of the support received among the Resolved Present Players and the Unresolved Players.**


Percentage Who Had Anyone Support Them In Their Decision Not To Play
(By Problem Player Segment)

Although the differences are only significant at the 85% confidence level, preliminary evidence suggests that the Resolved Present Players (who continue to play) were less likely to require and/or receive support than the Resolved Past Players (who stopped playing) (50% versus 71%; p<.15). Resolved Present Players receiving help or encouragement (n=14), 64% noted it was received exclusively from a spouse or partner. This represents almost one-third (32%) of all Resolved Present Players. In contrast, almost half of the Resolved Past Players mentioned one or more sources of support beyond their spouse or partner. This result is certainly consistent with other findings which profile the Resolved Present Players as being less severely impacted by problem VL gambling and better able to manage their play. Thus, Resolved Present Players are less needy of external/outside support or constraints on play.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

SPOUSAL SUPPORT


Percentage Receiving Support From Spouse & Perceived Effectiveness
(By Problem Player Segments)

It is particularly compelling that Resolved Past Players, who tend to rate their problem VL play similarly to the Unresolved Players, are more likely to cite their spouse or partner as playing an important support role in terminating their play. **Of the Resolved Past Players in a significant relationship (n=12), 92% indicate that their spouse or partner supported them in their decision to abstain from video lottery. In the majority of these cases (82%), the spouse exerted a strong positive effect throughout the process.**

This was also true for the Resolved Present Players. Although only half (47%) of those Resolved Present Players in a significant relationship reported specifically receiving support from their spouse, all (100%) considered this encouragement to have had a strong impact on their efforts to reduce play.

For Unresolved Players in a significant relationship, the spouse or partner is less likely to be playing a supportive role ($p<.10$). This may be due to many intervening factors such as Unresolved Players being more inclined to conceal the extent of their VL gambling from their spouse; the spousal relationship may be unstable; or the spouse may be involved in VL play as well.

Currently, 70% of Unresolved Players are involved in a spousal relationship (n=32), of which two-thirds indicate that their spouse or partner is offering them encouragement and support in resolving their VL gambling problem. When they do provide support, less than half of these Unresolved Players (≈22%) note their spouse's contribution as having a strong positive effect. This means that, overall, only one-third (34%) of Unresolved VL Players (n=32) who are involved in a significant relationship are benefiting from spousal support, as compared to 84% of those Resolved Past Players who have successfully overcome their VL problem. Thus, there appears to be an opportunity to support and assist the spouses and/or partners of Problem Players.

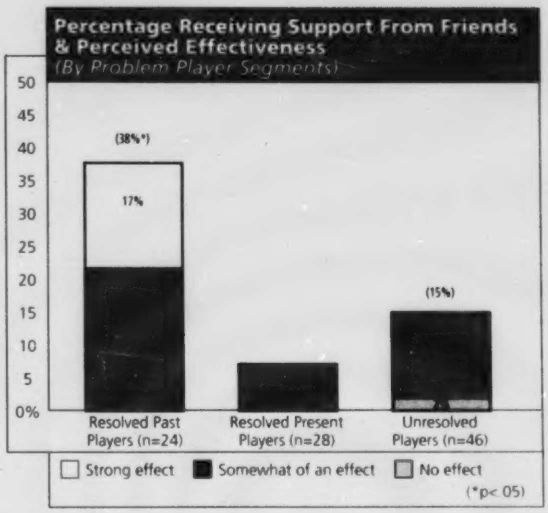
The contributing role of this spousal relationship to problem resolution should be explored in greater detail to identify those impediments to spousal support and encouragement and to enhance the effectiveness of spousal interventions and help.

SUPPORT OF FRIENDS

Friends are the other most significant source of support when attempting to resolve more serious problem VL gambling. Specifically, **those adults who were able to successfully resolve their VL gambling through abstinence (Resolved Past Players) were over twice as likely to cite the support and encouragement of friends.** In all of these cases, friends were considered to be at least somewhat helpful in their support, with 17% noting friends had a strong effect on their success.

As noted previously, the Resolved Present Players relied almost exclusively on spousal (32%) or family support (14%) for getting their play under control. It appears they had less need for a more extensive support network and did not require additional reinforcement beyond the encouragement of their immediate families.

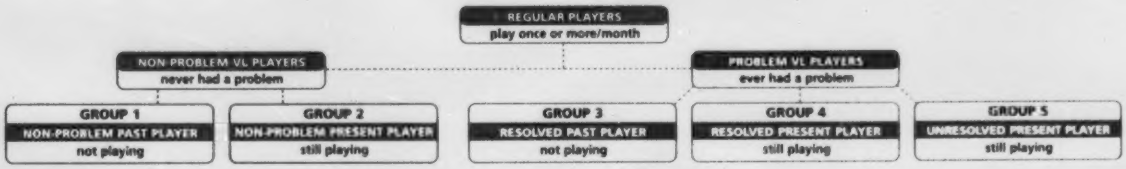
Surprisingly, **the Unresolved Players appear to be under-utilizing the potential for friends to assist them in stopping or reducing play.** This may be partially due to the fact that 63% of Problem Players report having friends that currently play VL games on a regular basis, and 65% have friends who they believe are either past or present Problem VL Gamblers. On average, Unresolved Players report knowing approximately four friends who fall into the Problem Player category. While these findings do not differ significantly among any of the Problem Player segments, it should be kept in mind that, on average, the Unresolved Players are spending at least 6 times as much time playing VLT's each month, as compared to Resolved Present Players (828 minutes versus 140 minutes) and 35 times more time than the Non-Problem Players (828 minutes versus 34 minutes). As a result, Unresolved VL Players will be exposed to other players significantly more often. This will be particularly true for the one-third of Unresolved Players who typically play with friends or family members 50% or more of the time they spend playing the machines.


Percentage Receiving Support From Friends & Perceived Effectiveness
(By Problem Player Segments)

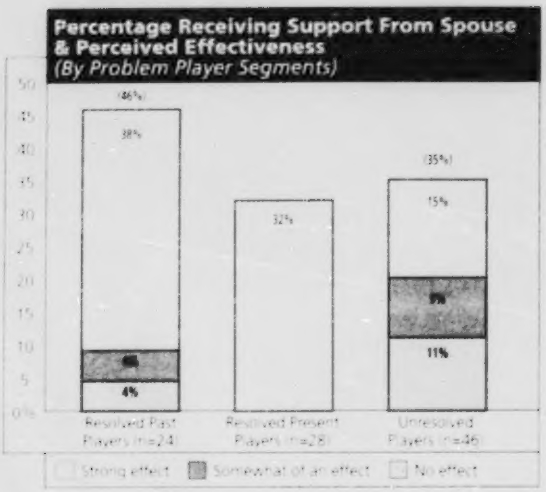
It appears that the support of friends and family differs significantly among the player segments. Not surprisingly, Non-Problem Players report little to no encouragement or pressure in regard to the reduction or cessation of their VL play. This is consistent with the non-problematic nature of their VL gambling, and the fact they require no assistance nor encounter difficulties in altering their play behaviours as necessary.

In contrast, Problem Players, in general, are more likely than Non-Problem Players to report significantly higher levels of peer pressure, in particular from friends, to resume their problem play levels.

Although only a small proportion indicate they have experienced pressure to resume play levels (14%), it may be helpful for such players to be provided with useful


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

SPOUSAL SUPPORT


Percentage Receiving Support From Spouse & Perceived Effectiveness
(By Problem Player Segments)

It is particularly compelling that Resolved Past Players, who tend to rate their problem VL play similarly to the Unresolved Players, are more likely to cite their spouse or partner as playing an important support role in terminating their play. **Of the Resolved Past Players in a significant relationship (n=12), 92% indicate that their spouse or partner supported them in their decision to abstain from video lottery. In the majority of these cases (82%), the spouse exerted a strong positive effect throughout the process.**

This was also true for the Resolved Present Players. Although only half (47%) of those Resolved Present Players in a significant relationship reported specifically receiving support from their spouse, all (100%) considered this encouragement to have had a strong impact on their efforts to reduce play.

For Unresolved Players in a significant relationship, the spouse or partner is less likely to be playing a supportive role (p<.10). This may be due to many intervening factors such as Unresolved Players being more inclined to conceal the extent of their VL gambling from their spouse; the spousal relationship may be unstable; or the spouse may be involved in VL play as well.

Currently, 70% of Unresolved Players are involved in a spousal relationship (n=32), of which two-thirds indicate that their spouse or partner is offering them encouragement and support in resolving their VL gambling problem. When they do provide support, less than half of these Unresolved Players (≈22%) note their spouse's contribution as having a strong positive effect. This means that, overall, only one-third (34%) of Unresolved VL Players (n=32) who are involved in a significant relationship are benefiting from spousal support, as compared to 84% of those Resolved Past Players who have successfully overcome their VL problem. Thus, there appears to be an opportunity to support and assist the spouses and/or partners of Problem Players.

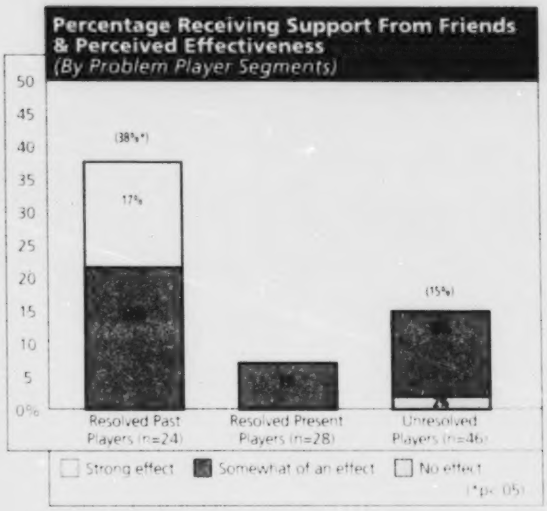
The contributing role of this spousal relationship to problem resolution should be explored in greater detail to identify those impediments to spousal support and encouragement and to enhance the effectiveness of spousal interventions and help.

SUPPORT OF FRIENDS

Friends are the other most significant source of support when attempting to resolve more serious problem VL gambling. Specifically, **those adults who were able to successfully resolve their VL gambling through abstinence (Resolved Past Players) were over twice as likely to cite the support and encouragement of friends.** In all of these cases, friends were considered to be at least somewhat helpful in their support, with 17% noting friends had a strong effect on their success.

As noted previously, the Resolved Present Players relied almost exclusively on spousal (32%) or family support (14%) for getting their play under control. It appears they had less need for a more extensive support network and did not require additional reinforcement beyond the encouragement of their immediate families.

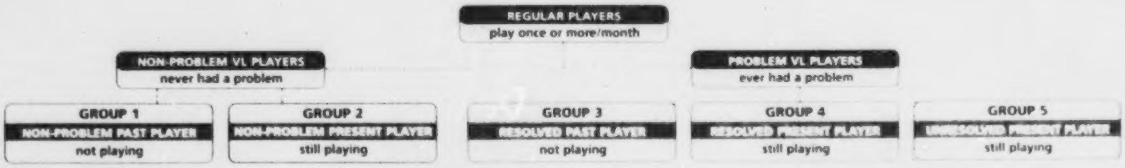
Surprisingly, **the Unresolved Players appear to be under-utilizing the potential for friends to assist them in stopping or reducing play.** This may be partially due to the fact that 63% of Problem Players report having friends that currently play VL games on a regular basis, and 65% have friends who they believe are either past or present Problem VL Gamblers. On average, Unresolved Players report knowing approximately four friends who fall into the Problem Player category. While these findings do not differ significantly among any of the Problem Player segments, it should be kept in mind that, on average, the Unresolved Players are spending at least 6 times as much time playing VLT's each month, as compared to Resolved Present Players (828 minutes versus 140 minutes) and 35 times more time than the Non-Problem Players (828 minutes versus 34 minutes). As a result, Unresolved VL Players will be exposed to other players significantly more often. This will be particularly true for the one-third of Unresolved Players who typically play with friends or family members 50% or more of the time they spend playing the machines.


Percentage Receiving Support From Friends & Perceived Effectiveness
(By Problem Player Segments)

It appears that the support of friends and family differs significantly among the player segments. Not surprisingly, Non-Problem Players report little to no encouragement or pressure in regard to the reduction or cessation of their VL play. This is consistent with the non-problematic nature of their VL gambling, and the fact they require no assistance nor encounter difficulties in altering their play behaviours as necessary.

In contrast, Problem Players, in general, are more likely than Non-Problem Players to report significantly higher levels of peer pressure, in particular from friends, to resume their problem play levels.

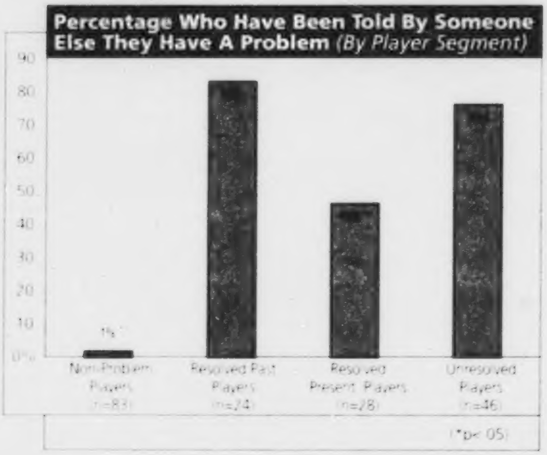
Although only a small proportion indicate they have experienced pressure to resume play levels (14%), it may be helpful for such players to be provided with useful


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

information and/or strategies for countering the negative influence of friends or family. While more than half of the past and present Problem Players are receiving support and encouragement from at least one individual, the Unresolved Players are less likely to find the assistance very effective. The key difference appears to be related to the use and effectiveness of spousal support; Unresolved Players are less likely to report moral support or encouragement from a spouse or partner and when they do, they tend to rate their contribution as less effective. The support of friends is also relied upon or referred to less often by the Unresolved Players, suggesting there is substantial room to enhance the support network of these players. For those who do not have the advantage of supportive friends and family, the provision of alternative networking may be advised (e.g., GA, self-help groups) or other sources that can be accessed to strengthen their resolve.

Compared to the other Problem Players, Resolved Past Players who have solved their problems with VL gambling through abstinence tended to receive support from more sources and were more inclined to consider the support of both friends and family as playing an important role in their recovery. In many cases, friends may be directly undermining the support of the spouse or partner, as these individuals are most likely to be putting pressure on the Problem Players to resume their VL activity. An avoidance strategy (of other players, VLT venues, etc.) will be advisable until the player is able to successfully resist giving in to the tempting combination of the machines' allure and peer pressure from those potentially experiencing similar VL problems.

RECOGNITION OF PROBLEM PLAY BY OTHERS (FRIENDS & FAMILY)


Percentage Who Have Been Told By Someone Else They Have A Problem *(By Player Segment)*

(*p<.05)

All respondents participating in the study were asked if anyone had ever told them that they were spending too much time or money on VL gambling. Only 1 out of the 83 Non-Problem Players taking part in the study indicated that someone else had expressed concerns over their play.

The vast majority of Resolved Past Players (83%) and Unresolved Players (76%) not only self identified their VL gambling as problematic, but also have had at least one other individual express the same concern. **However, simply having someone else point out or confirm a player's involvement in problem VL play is not related to a player's ultimate success in stopping the behaviour. As noted earlier, it is the subsequent support and encouragement provided by other individuals that differentiates between those Problem Players who were able to stop playing VLT's versus those who continue to play with problems.**

It is noteworthy that just under half (46%) of those players who resolved their VL problem through controlled play (Resolved Present Players) reported that someone else recognized their play as problematic. This suggests that the problems the Resolved Present Players were experiencing with their VL gambling were less obvious and/or had less impact on others.

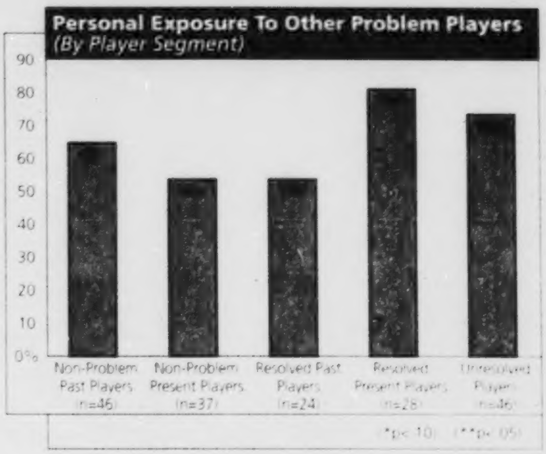
AWARENESS OF OTHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN PROBLEM VL PLAY

There were no significant differences among any of the Non-Problem or Problem Player segments in terms of their awareness of other Problem VL Gamblers. In general, 72% to 86% of all players taking part in the study know of at least one other individual who has experienced a problem with their video lottery play. Consistent with results from the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, Regular Players are almost twice as likely to be aware of and exposed to Problem Players, simply by virtue of their heightened sensitivity to play and greater involvement in the activity. Only the Resolved Present Players and the Unresolved Players reported any problem play by others living in their households (≈9% to 11%). For Unresolved Players who are still engaged in problem play, 7% specifically mentioned a spouse or partner's involvement in the activity as well.

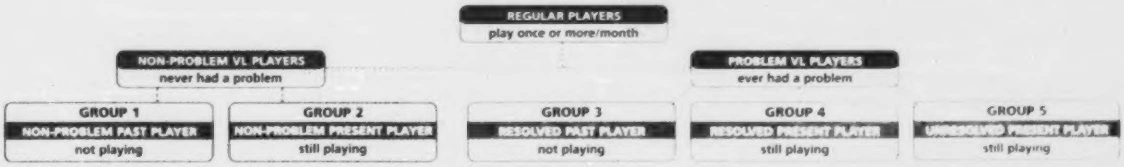
For all respondents, the reported incidence of problem play by family members living outside of their households is almost identical (13% to 18%). Friends are the most often mentioned source of exposure to problem gambling by those in all player segments, with Resolved Present Players (75%) reporting significantly higher levels than Resolved Past Players (50%; p<.10). In general, it appears that those Past and Present Problem Players who continue to engage in VL play (Resolved Present Players and Unresolved Players) are more likely than other players to be aware of and exposed to problem gambling through household members or friends.

Both Resolved Present Players (82%; p<.05) and Unresolved Players (74%; p<.10) are significantly more likely than the Resolved Past Players to report personal knowledge of at least one other problem VL gambler.

Personal Exposure To Other Problem Players
(By Player Segment)



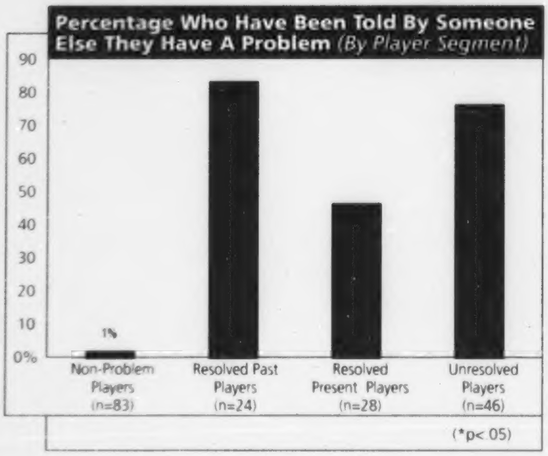
On average, players in both these groups are exposed to approximately four to five problem VL gamblers, either through family relationships (≈1) or friends (≈4). **Thus, exposure to other Problem Players, at both a household and personal level, tends to be greater for the two Problem Player segments still engaged in play.** In the case of those who have managed to adopt controlled play (Resolved Present Players), the increased exposure may serve as a reminder to be diligent in the management of their VL gambling, whereas for the Unresolved Players, the exposure may be facilitating their on-going problem play. During the survey, information was not gathered surrounding whether or not the problem play by others had been resolved. Therefore, it is not possible to determine if the Problem Players that Resolved Present Players are exposed to are more likely to have also overcome their difficulties with VL gambling. Future research should assess this relationship further.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

information and/or strategies for countering the negative influence of friends or family. While more than half of the past and present Problem Players are receiving support and encouragement from at least one individual, the Unresolved Players are less likely to find the assistance very effective. The key difference appears to be related to the use and effectiveness of spousal support; Unresolved Players are less likely to report moral support or encouragement from a spouse or partner and when they do, they tend to rate their contribution as less effective. The support of friends is also relied upon or referred to less often by the Unresolved Players, suggesting there is substantial room to enhance the support network of these players. For those who do not have the advantage of supportive friends and family, the provision of alternative networking may be advised (e.g., GA, self-help groups) or other sources that can be accessed to strengthen their resolve.

Compared to the other Problem Players, Resolved Past Players who have solved their problems with VL gambling through abstinence tended to receive support from more sources and were more inclined to consider the support of both friends and family as playing an important role in their recovery. In many cases, friends may be directly undermining the support of the spouse or partner, as these individuals are most likely to be putting pressure on the Problem Players to resume their VL activity. An avoidance strategy (of other players, VLT venues, etc.) will be advisable until the player is able to successfully resist giving in to the tempting combination of the machines' allure and peer pressure from those potentially experiencing similar VL problems.

RECOGNITION OF PROBLEM PLAY BY OTHERS (FRIENDS & FAMILY)


Percentage Who Have Been Told By Someone Else They Have A Problem *(By Player Segment)*

(*p<.05)

All respondents participating in the study were asked if anyone had ever told them that they were spending too much time or money on VL gambling. Only 1 out of the 83 Non-Problem Players taking part in the study indicated that someone else had expressed concerns over their play.

The vast majority of Resolved Past Players (83%) and Unresolved Players (76%) not only self identified their VL gambling as problematic, but also have had at least one other individual express the same concern. **However, simply having someone else point out or confirm a player's involvement in problem VL play is not related to a player's ultimate success in stopping the behaviour. As noted earlier, it is the subsequent support and encouragement provided by other individuals that differentiates between those Problem Players who were able to stop playing VLT's versus those who continue to play with problems.**

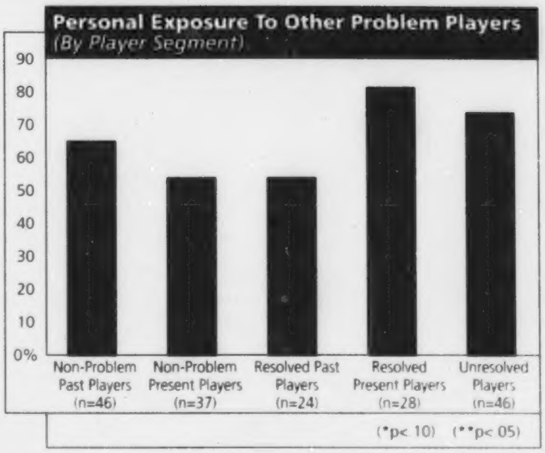
It is noteworthy that just under half (46%) of those players who resolved their VL problem through controlled play (Resolved Present Players) reported that someone else recognized their play as problematic. This suggests that the problems the Resolved Present Players were experiencing with their VL gambling were less obvious and/or had less impact on others.

AWARENESS OF OTHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN PROBLEM VL PLAY

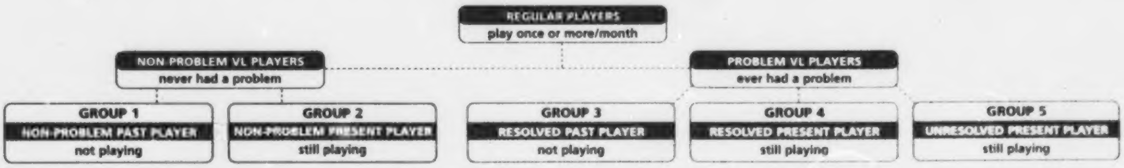
There were no significant differences among any of the Non-Problem or Problem Player segments in terms of their awareness of other Problem VL Gamblers. In general, 72% to 86% of all players taking part in the study know of at least one other individual who has experienced a problem with their video lottery play. Consistent with results from the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, Regular Players are almost twice as likely to be aware of and exposed to Problem Players, simply by virtue of their heightened sensitivity to play and greater involvement in the activity. Only the Resolved Present Players and the Unresolved Players reported any problem play by others living in their households (≈9% to 11%). For Unresolved Players who are still engaged in problem play, 7% specifically mentioned a spouse or partner's involvement in the activity as well.

For all respondents, the reported incidence of problem play by family members living outside of their households is almost identical (13% to 18%). Friends are the most often mentioned source of exposure to problem gambling by those in all player segments, with Resolved Present Players (75%) reporting significantly higher levels than Resolved Past Players (50%; p<.10). In general, it appears that those Past and Present Problem Players who continue to engage in VL play (Resolved Present Players and Unresolved Players) are more likely than other players to be aware of and exposed to problem gambling through household members or friends.

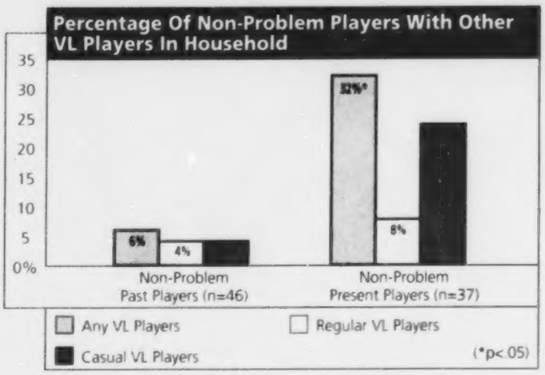
Both Resolved Present Players (82%; p<.05) and Unresolved Players (74%; p<.10) are significantly more likely than the Resolved Past Players to report personal knowledge of at least one other problem VL gambler.


Personal Exposure To Other Problem Players
(By Player Segment)

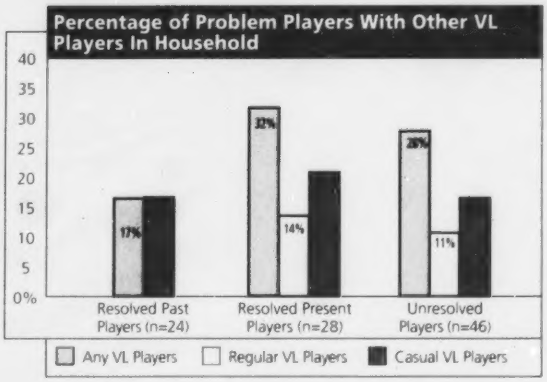
On average, players in both these groups are exposed to approximately four to five problem VL gamblers, either through family relationships (≈1) or friends (≈4). **Thus, exposure to other Problem Players, at both a household and personal level, tends to be greater for the two Problem Player segments still engaged in play.** In the case of those who have managed to adopt controlled play (Resolved Present Players), the increased exposure may serve as a reminder to be diligent in the management of their VL gambling, whereas for the Unresolved Players, the exposure may be facilitating their on-going problem play. During the survey, information was not gathered surrounding whether or not the problem play by others had been resolved. Therefore, it is not possible to determine if the Problem Players that Resolved Present Players are exposed to are more likely to have also overcome their difficulties with VL gambling. Future research should assess this relationship further.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

EXPOSURE TO HOUSEHOLD VL PLAY


Percentage Of Non-Problem Players With Other VL Players In Household

Those Non-Problem Players who have continued to play video lottery games after reducing or stopping play, are significantly more likely to have other players in their households, especially Casual Players. Almost three-quarters (73%) of the Non-Problem Players themselves are also playing VLT's on a casual basis of less than once a month.


Percentage of Problem Players With Other VL Players In Household

Similar to the Non-Problem Players, approximately one-third of those Problem Players who are continuing to play VLT's (Resolved Present and Unresolved Players) also have other individuals in their households who play the games either regularly or casually.

Virtually none of the Resolved Past Players report living with someone else who plays VLT's on a regular monthly basis, although 17% note household members who play periodically on a casual basis.

In comparison, 11% to 14% of the Resolved and Unresolved playing segments report Regular Players living in their households. The percentage exposed to casual play is similar across all the Problem Players segments, with approximately one-fifth of both past and present Problem Players living with Casual VL Players.

It will be recalled that approximately 9% to 11% of the Resolved Present and Unresolved Players reported that someone in their household has also experienced difficulties with their VL gambling. Therefore, the two Problem Player groups continuing to engage in play appear to have greater exposure to both regular and problem play at a household level.

The fact that the Resolved Past Players report no exposure to regular VL play by others living in their households most likely contributes to their ability to refrain from playing the machines.

It appears that the video lottery play of significant others has an impact on the behaviour of those who develop problems with their VL gambling. Much of this association is likely a function of the lifestyle and attitudinal factors of the significant others. The level of household VL play is significantly higher within those player segments still engaged in playing the games. Thus, there is greater tolerance and involvement in video lottery gambling among the household members. There is also a higher incidence of other household members having also developed problems. As was found in the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, if a Problem VL Gambler is living with another Regular VL

Player, in approximately half of the cases, both individuals will be involved in problem play. Thus, to be effective, any intervention or treatment strategy may have to be directed at both Problem Players. In screening Problem VL Gamblers, service providers would be advised to determine the play behaviours of other household members. This not only provides greater direction in assessing the availability and potential for support, it also offers insight as to the factors impacting successful resolution of their problem VL gambling.

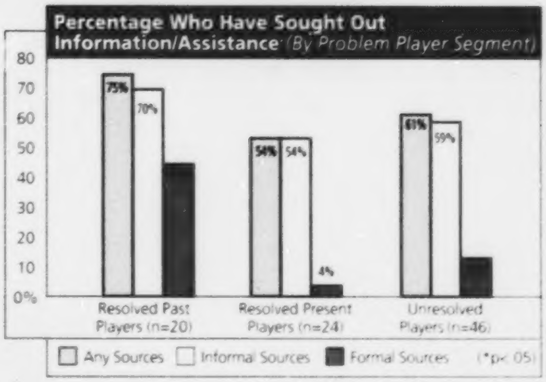
Those adults who have successfully stopped playing VLT's, regardless of whether they have experienced problems or not, tend to report there are no other Regular VL Players in their households. In some cases, it may be advantageous to enlist the aid of other family or household members in assisting Problem Players by also terminating or reducing their VL play. By counseling clients on a household bais, there may also be greater likelihood of significant others "buying in" to the changes most likely to result in positive outcomes.

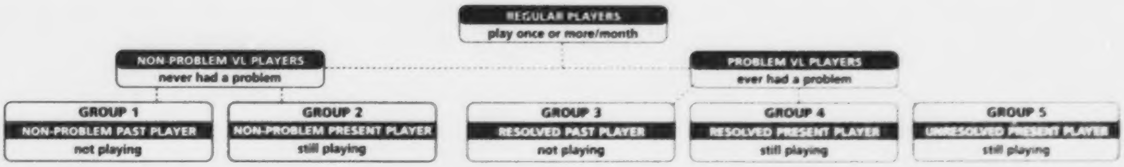
Certainly, simple recognition and acknowledgement of the problem by others is found to be insufficient to motivate or support player change. In the absence of internal controls over their behaviour, it appears to be the effectiveness of on-going support and encouragement by friends and family which more strongly differentiates between those who are able to successfully resolve their problem VL gambling and those who are not.

USE OF FORMAL & INFORMAL SERVICES FOR ASSISTANCE AND/OR INFORMATION

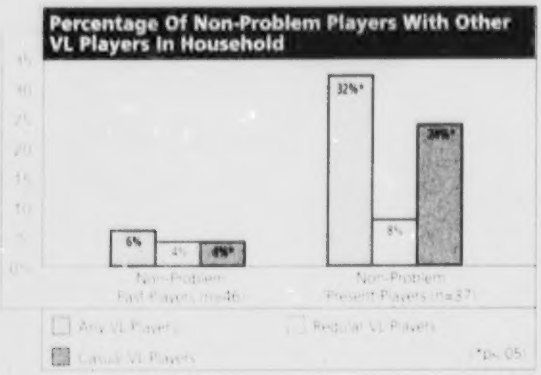
All respondents were asked if they had ever sought out any information and/or assistance to help either themselves or someone else with a gambling problem. Similar to previous results obtained both in General Population and Regular VL Players' surveys in the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, approximately 4% to 5% of those who have never had a problem with their VL play have sought out information to assist someone else with a gambling problem. Given the low incidence of Non-Problem Players accessing problem gambling services or support, sample sizes were insufficient to allow for profiling of such activity. Therefore, only Problem Players were further questioned as to the use and effectiveness of the various formal and informal sources of assistance available to Problem VL Gamblers in Nova Scotia.

Over half to three-quarters of any of the Problem VL Players have sought out information or assistance to help them deal with their VL gambling. This suggests that, for the most part, Problem VL Players are motivated to seek out information or assistance. Within all segments, the use of informal sources for assistance exceeds the use of formal gambling service by at least a factor

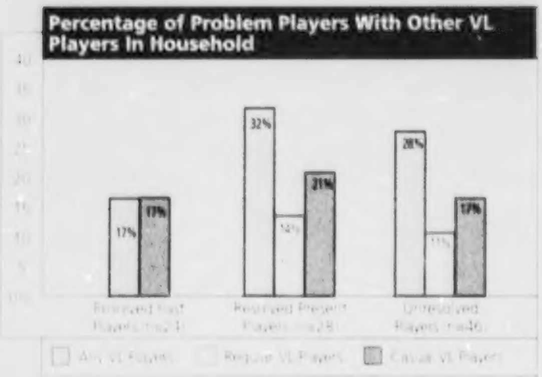

Percentage Who Have Sought Out Information/Assistance *(By Problem Player Segment)*


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

EXPOSURE TO HOUSEHOLD VL PLAY



Those Non-Problem Players who have continued to play video lottery games after reducing or stopping play, are significantly more likely to have other players in their households, especially Casual Players. Almost three-quarters (73%) of the Non-Problem Players themselves are also playing VLT's on a casual basis of less than once a month.



Similar to the Non-Problem Players, approximately one-third of those Problem Players who are continuing to play VLT's (Resolved Present and Unresolved Players) also have other individuals in their households who play the games either regularly or casually.

Virtually none of the Resolved Past Players report living with someone else who plays VLT's on a regular monthly basis, although 17% note household members who play periodically on a casual basis.

In comparison, 11% to 14% of the Resolved and Unresolved playing segments report Regular Players living in their households. The percentage exposed to casual play is similar across all the Problem Players segments, with approximately one-fifth of both past and present Problem Players living with Casual VL Players.

It will be recalled that approximately 9% to 11% of the Resolved Present and Unresolved Players reported that someone in their household has also experienced difficulties with their VL gambling. Therefore, the two Problem Player groups continuing to engage in play appear to have greater exposure to both regular and problem play at a household level.

The fact that the Resolved Past Players report no exposure to regular VL play by others living in their households most likely contributes to their ability to refrain from playing the machines.

It appears that the video lottery play of significant others has an impact on the behaviour of those who develop problems with their VL gambling. Much of this association is likely a function of the lifestyle and attitudinal factors of the significant others. The level of household VL play is significantly higher within those player segments still engaged in playing the games. Thus, there is greater tolerance and involvement in video lottery gambling among the household members. There is also a higher incidence of other household members having also developed problems. As was found in the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, if a Problem VL Gambler is living with another Regular VL

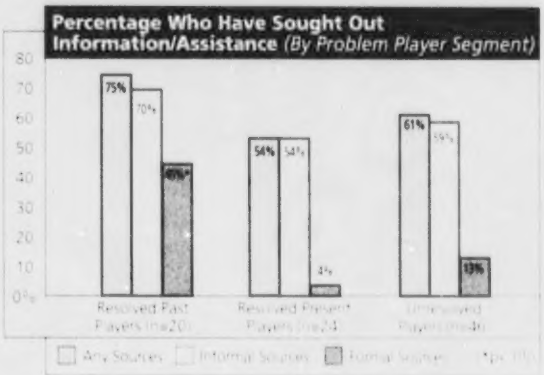
Player, in approximately half of the cases, both individuals will be involved in problem play. Thus, to be effective, any intervention or treatment strategy may have to be directed at both Problem Players. In screening Problem VL Gamblers, service providers would be advised to determine the play behaviours of other household members. This not only provides greater direction in assessing the availability and potential for support, it also offers insight as to the factors impacting successful resolution of their problem VL gambling.

Those adults who have successfully stopped playing VLT's, regardless of whether they have experienced problems or not, tend to report there are no other Regular VL Players in their households. In some cases, it may be advantageous to enlist the aid of other family or household members in assisting Problem Players by also terminating or reducing their VL play. By counseling clients on a household bais, there may also be greater likelihood of significant others "buying in" to the changes most likely to result in positive outcomes.

Certainly, simple recognition and acknowledgement of the problem by others is found to be insufficient to motivate or support player change. In the absence of internal controls over their behaviour, it appears to be the effectiveness of on-going support and encouragement by friends and family which more strongly differentiates between those who are able to successfully resolve their problem VL gambling and those who are not.

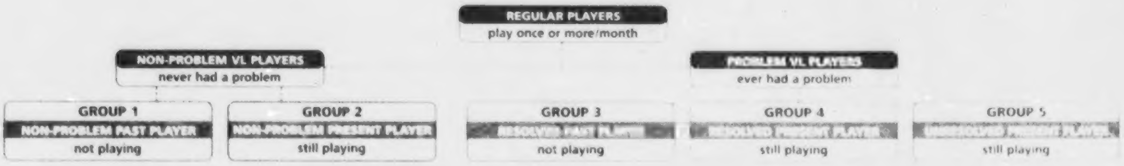
USE OF FORMAL & INFORMAL SERVICES FOR ASSISTANCE AND/OR INFORMATION

All respondents were asked if they had ever sought out any information and/or assistance to help either themselves or someone else with a gambling problem. Similar to previous results obtained both in General Population and Regular VL Players' surveys in the 1997/98 NS VL Players' Survey, approximately 4% to 5% of those who have never had a problem with their VL play have sought out information to assist someone else with a gambling problem. Given the low incidence of Non-Problem Players accessing problem gambling services or support, sample sizes were insufficient to allow for profiling of such activity. Therefore, only Problem Players were further questioned as to the use and effectiveness of the various formal and informal sources of assistance available to Problem VL Gamblers in Nova Scotia.



Percentage Who Have Sought Out Information/Assistance *(By Problem Player Segment)*

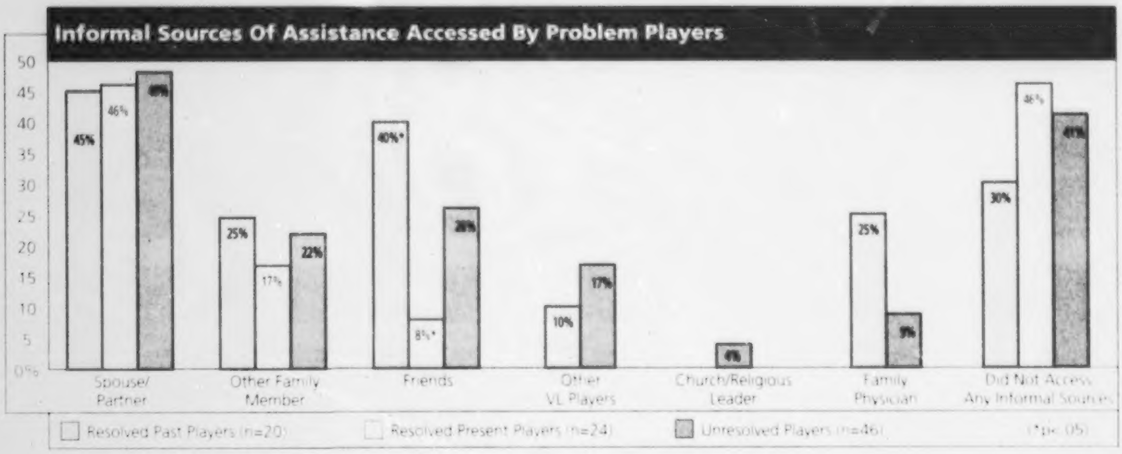
Over half to three-quarters of any of the Problem VL Players have sought out information or assistance to help them deal with their VL gambling. This suggests that, for the most part, Problem VL Players are motivated to seek out information or assistance. Within all segments, the use of informal sources for assistance exceeds the use of formal gambling service by at least a factor



REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

of 2. In the case of Resolved Present Players, this discrepancy is even more pronounced, with only 4%, or 1 individual, noting they had contacted an agency, organization or service specifically designed to assist problem gamblers.

USE OF INFORMAL SUPPORT/ASSISTANCE


Informal Sources Of Assistance Accessed By Problem Players

Due to small sample sizes for the Resolved Player segments, only a single statistically significant difference emerges among the three player groups in terms of the informal sources of assistance accessed. However, for practical purposes, there appears to be different patterns of behaviour that are consistent with other findings. Furthermore, the **perceived effectiveness of the various sources used does vary significantly among the groups.**

USE OF SPOUSE OR PARTNER

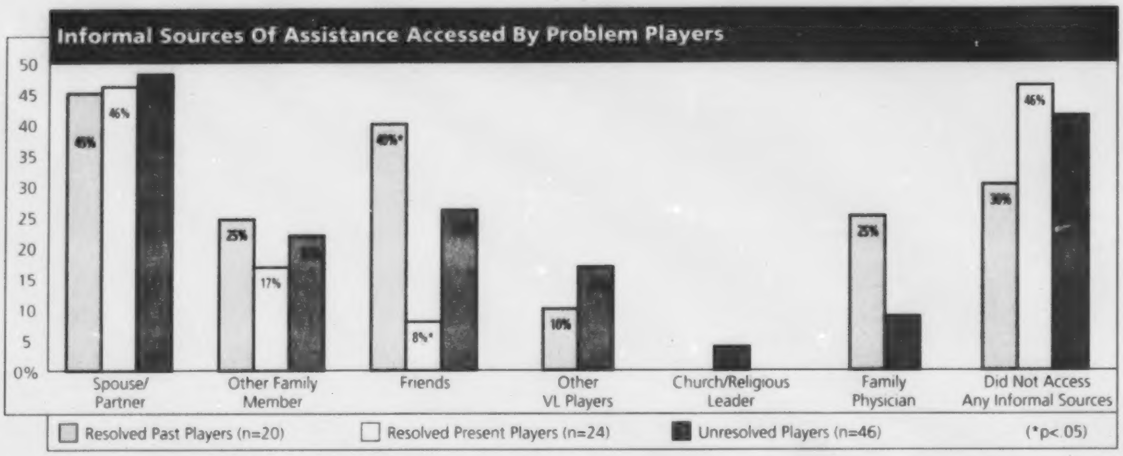
While all past and present Problem VL Players are equally likely to have gone to a spouse or partner for help, those who resolved their problem play are significantly more likely to rate spousal assistance as "extremely helpful" (rating of 5/5), as compared to the Unresolved Players. In fact, 42% of Resolved Present Players and 30% of Resolved Past Players attribute a top rating to their spouses' contribution, as opposed to only 13% of Unresolved Players (p<.05). **As noted for encouragement and support, the Unresolved Players derive significantly less benefit and assistance from a spouse or partner.**

USE OF OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

Again, a similar proportion of all three Problem Player groups have gone to other family members for assistance (≈17% to 25%). While a greater proportion of Resolved Past Players rate the contribution of family members as extremely helpful (20% versus ≈8%), the differences are not statistically significant. Outside of their spouses (46%), family (17%) is the only other source Resolved Present Players typically turned to for assistance with their VL gambling. **Given the successful resolution of their problem play, it appears that the more private support of close family was sufficient for approximately half of the Resolved Present Players, with the remaining 46% able to resume control over their VL play on their own.**

of 2. In the case of Resolved Present Players, this discrepancy is even more pronounced, with only 4%, or 1 individual, noting they had contacted an agency, organization or service specifically designed to assist problem gamblers.

USE OF INFORMAL SUPPORT/ASSISTANCE



Due to small sample sizes for the Resolved Player segments, only a single statistically significant difference emerges among the three player groups in terms of the informal sources of assistance accessed. However, for practical purposes, there appears to be different patterns of behaviour that are consistent with other findings. Furthermore, the **perceived effectiveness of the various sources used does vary significantly among the groups.**

USE OF SPOUSE OR PARTNER

While all past and present Problem VL Players are equally likely to have gone to a spouse or partner for help, those who resolved their problem play are significantly more likely to rate spousal assistance as "extremely helpful" (rating of 5/5), as compared to the Unresolved Players. In fact, 42% of Resolved Present Players and 30% of Resolved Past Players attribute a top rating to their spouses' contribution, as opposed to only 13% of Unresolved Players ($p<.05$). **As noted for encouragement and support, the Unresolved Players derive significantly less benefit and assistance from a spouse or partner.**

USE OF OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

Again, a similar proportion of all three Problem Player groups have gone to other family members for assistance (≈17% to 25%). While a greater proportion of Resolved Past Players rate the contribution of family members as extremely helpful (20% versus ≈8%), the differences are not statistically significant. Outside of their spouses (46%), family (17%) is the only other source Resolved Present Players typically turned to for assistance with their VL gambling. **Given the successful resolution of their problem play, it appears that the more private support of close family was sufficient for approximately half of the Resolved Present Players, with the remaining 46% able to resume control over their VL play on their own.**

USE OF FRIENDS

Resolved Past Players, who no longer are playing VLT's, derive greater benefit from the help of friends than either of the other two playing segments (p<.05). Thirty percent of Resolved Past Players noted friends were somewhat (10%) and extremely (20%) helpful. Only 11% of Unresolved Players and none of the Resolved Present Players reported any effective assistance from friends.

USE OF OTHER VL PLAYERS

In total, approximately 10% of all past and present Problem VL Players have gone to other players for help, primarily the Unresolved and Resolved Past Players. There is no difference in the perceived helpfulness of other players, with approximately 5% of those involved in problem VL gambling or having stopped play attributing a top rating to such assistance.

USE OF CHURCH/RELIGIOUS LEADER

Out of all Problem Players, only two Unresolved Players report having sought assistance from their church or religious leader. One individual noted the provided support was extremely helpful, whereas the other rated the helpfulness as relatively ineffective (2/5).

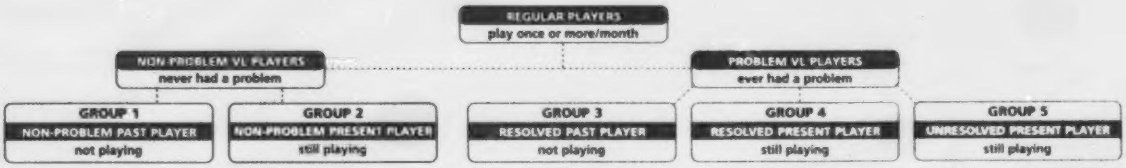
USE OF FAMILY PHYSICIAN

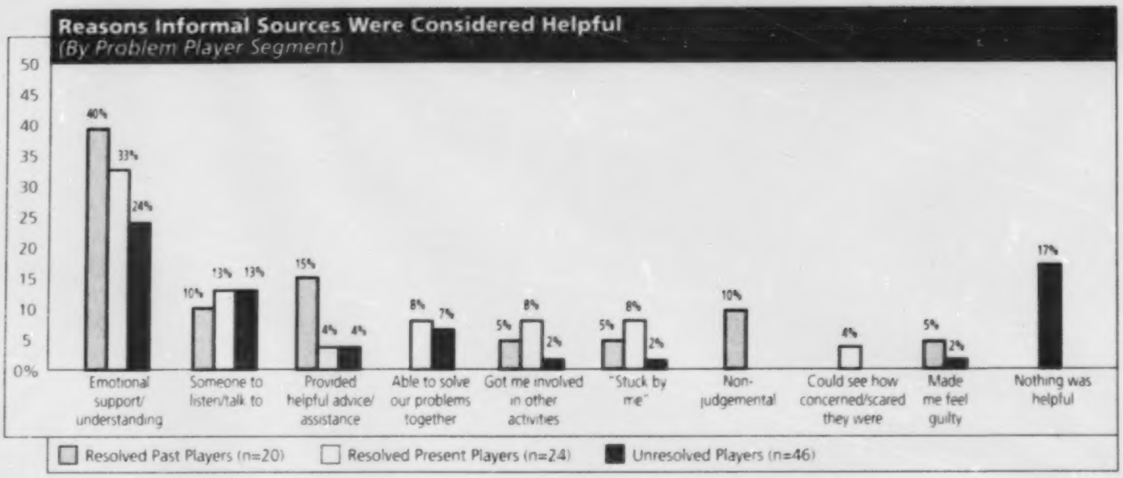
The family physician was accessed by one-quarter of Resolved Past Players and 9% of the Unresolved Players. The Resolved Past Players who went to their family doctor rated their helpfulness highly (20%). Response from those who have not yet solved their VL problem was more mixed, although none of the Unresolved Players attributed a rating below 3/5 to the assistance received from their physician. This suggests that the family doctor can play an important and effective role in directing players for assistance.

REASONS INFORMAL SOURCES WERE CONSIDERED HELPFUL

For all Problem Players, past and present, emotional **support and understanding** is ranked as the most valuable and helpful service provided by informal sources of assistance, especially coming from family and loved ones. Resolved Past Players were essentially the only player group to cite that the assistance received from others was **non-judgmental** (10%) and that the **advice, suggestions and assistance provided were helpful** (15%).

All Problem Players were equally likely to mention the helpfulness of simply **having someone to talk to and to listen to them** (≈13%). They were able to draw on the conviction of their friends and family that they could overcome the problem.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing



"Just the emotional support, they encouraged me not to play and told me I was a good person." (Female, 41 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"My wife. She supported me and understood I had a problem, but stuck with me through it all." (Male, 31 years, Resolved Present Player)

"My husband and family were supportive, encouraging and listened. My minister was the same, supportive spiritually." (Female, 60 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"Encouragement, they knew I could stop if I really tried. They were there to talk to when I felt down. They supported me one hundred and ten percent." (Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)

"My wife and friends; they are understanding, able to realize the position I was in and became part of the solution." (Male, 38 years, Resolved Past Player)

In some cases, the spouse/partner provided practical support in terms of **financial management.** Friends and family were also instrumental in distracting the Problem Player from VLT's and getting them **involved in other activities.**

"My husband talked to me and supported me when my problem was bad. My kids were there for me and helped me do other things to keep me from playing so much." (Female, 34 years, Resolved Present Player)

"My wife was helpful because she got the finances under control when I was unable to do so." (Male, 41 years, Unresolved Player)

"Just the support I received, financial planning to get back on track and they helped me in coping with my problems that came after my addiction." (Male, 36 years, Resolved Past Player)

"My friends would encourage me to go with them to do other things and take my mind off VLT's." (Male, 33 years, Resolved Past Player)

Approximately 8% of both Resolved Present Players and Unresolved Players noted that the **commitment of their spouse or partner to also stop or reduce their VL play** was very helpful. This appears to be particularly relevant for women.

"My husband had the same problem as me so we did it together."
(Female, 27 years, Resolved Present Player)

"He played too so it was good to talk to him so we both could see that we had a problem and could work it out together." (Female, 52 years, Resolved Present Player)

"We were both going through it so we were there for each other."
(Female, 50 years, Partially Resolved Present Player)

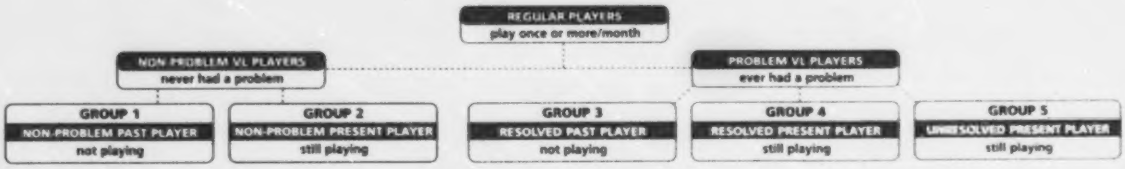
It was only Unresolved Players (17%) who reported that nothing anyone did for them was helpful.

"Nothing really. Told me to stay out of places that had machines, but I knew that." (Male, 41 years, Unresolved Player)

"Nothing. I just still want to play even though I want to stop. She tries to help but can't." (Male, 29 years, Unresolved Player)

**The most helpful and valued assistance provided by informal sources consists of both practical and emotional support provided over the "long run" of players trying to break free of their VL problem. While the spouse and family play the primary support role, an extended support network involving friends and, in some cases, the family physician was considered particularly helpful for those attempting to solve more severe gambling problems. In fact, the effectiveness of the informal support received by the players appears to be directly related to the success of their long-term resolution of the problem. The moral support and understanding of others contributes strongly to strengthening the resolve of the player. However, it appears that the more practical aspects of the support are likely what makes the involvement of others so critical to overcoming the problem. By being there to listen and to talk to, including them in other activities, and offering positive reinforcements, this informal support network is helping the individual fill in time previously dedicated to VLT's, with something that is still personally and intrinsically rewarding.
The resulting improvement in self-esteem, finances, and family and friend relationships likely helps to offset and replace the benefits previously derived from VL play.**

Unfortunately, not all individuals will have ready access to an informal support network. In many cases, the family unit has been damaged (or possibly destroyed) and may require attention, if the parties are still willing to move forward together. Alternative options for providing informal support may have to be identified to provide the Problem Player with resources to access in the absence of play, and


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

"My friends would encourage me to go with them to do other things and take my mind off VLT's." (Male, 33 years, Resolved Past Player)

Approximately 8% of both Resolved Present Players and Unresolved Players noted that the **commitment of their spouse or partner to also stop or reduce their VL play** was very helpful. This appears to be particularly relevant for women.

"My husband had the same problem as me so we did it together."
(Female, 27 years, Resolved Present Player)

"He played too so it was good to talk to him so we both could see that we had a problem and could work it out together." (Female, 52 years, Resolved Present Player)

"We were both going through it so we were there for each other."
(Female, 50 years, Partially Resolved Present Player)

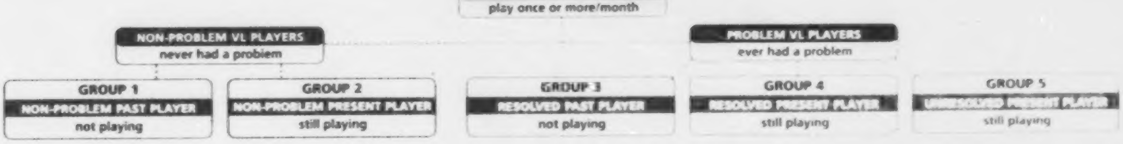
It was only Unresolved Players (17%) who reported that nothing anyone did for them was helpful.

"Nothing really. Told me to stay out of places that had machines, but I knew that." (Male, 41 years, Unresolved Player)

"Nothing. I just still want to play even though I want to stop. She tries to help but can't." (Male, 29 years, Unresolved Player)

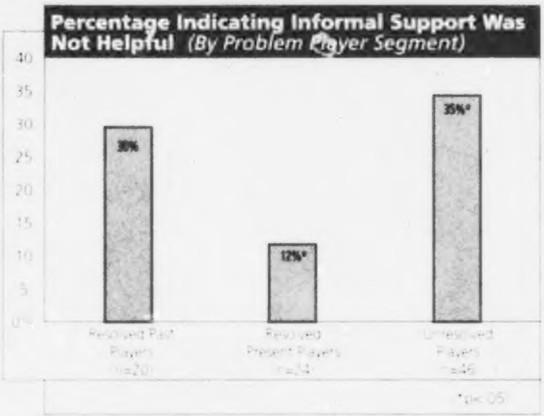
The most helpful and valued assistance provided by informal sources consists of both practical and emotional support provided over the "long run" of players trying to break free of their VL problem. While the spouse and family play the primary support role, an extended support network involving friends and, in some cases, the family physician was considered particularly helpful for those attempting to solve more severe gambling problems. In fact, the effectiveness of the informal support received by the players appears to be directly related to the success of their long-term resolution of the problem. The moral support and understanding of others contributes strongly to strengthening the resolve of the player. However, it appears that the more practical aspects of the support are likely what makes the involvement of others so critical to overcoming the problem. By being there to listen and to talk to, including them in other activities, and offering positive reinforcements, this informal support network is helping the individual fill in time previously dedicated to VLT's, with something that is still personally and intrinsically rewarding. The resulting improvement in self-esteem, finances, and family and friend relationships likely helps to offset and replace the benefits previously derived from VL play.

Unfortunately, not all individuals will have ready access to an informal support network. In many cases, the family unit has been damaged (or possibly destroyed) and may require attention, if the parties are still willing to move forward together. Alternative options for providing informal support may have to be identified to provide the Problem Player with resources to access in the absence of play, and

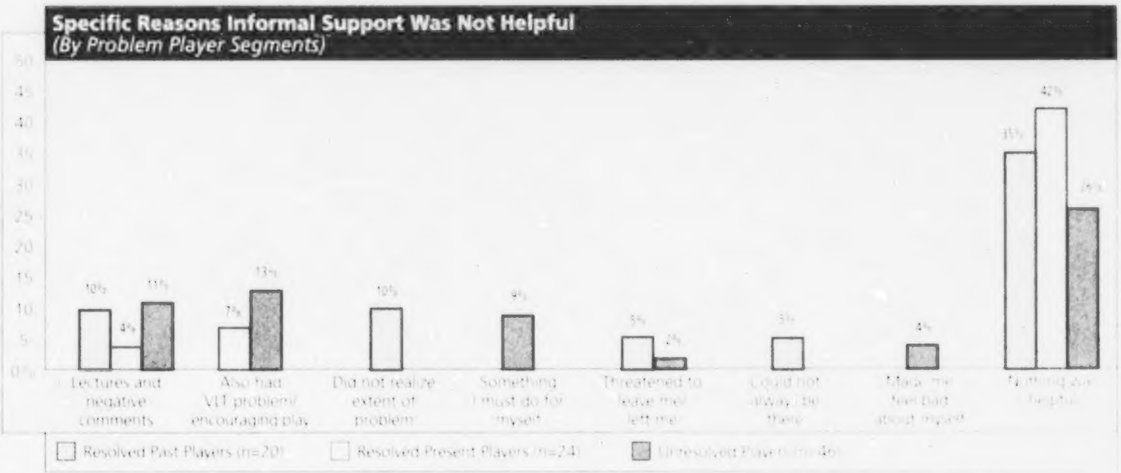

REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

in between counseling or treatment sessions. Without this environmental support, it appears that positive outcomes are unlikely to be achieved. Again, the cooperation of family and friends should be enlisted and these individuals need to be provided with the necessary information and support to be an effective partner in the resolution process.

REASONS INFORMAL SOURCES WERE NOT CONSIDERED HELPFUL



The Resolved Present Players were least likely to indicate that assistance provided by informal support sources was not helpful. This is likely due, in part, to the fact that the Resolved Present Players have not accrued as much financial and relationship damage as the other players prior to getting their VL gambling back under control. As a result, the gambling may have been a less contentious issue for the spouse and family. It may also be that the act of sharing their resolve to reduce and manage their VL play with their families assisted them in maintaining and strengthening their commitment to change. The Unresolved Players (35%) and, to a slightly lesser extent, Resolved Past Players (30%) were most inclined to note specific examples of responses and behaviours by others that were not helpful in dealing with their VL gambling problem.

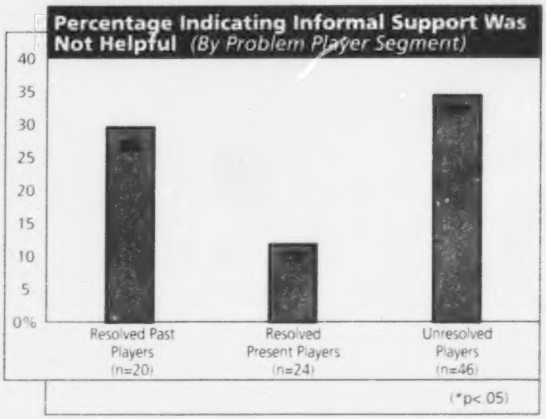


Negative comments, lectures and negative reinforcement from friends and family were perceived to be very unhelpful and counter-productive by the players (≈10%). **Nagging** did little to offer the player advice or assistance and tended to further erode self-esteem. It also, in some cases, drove players to the machines and in others precipitated fights and arguments.

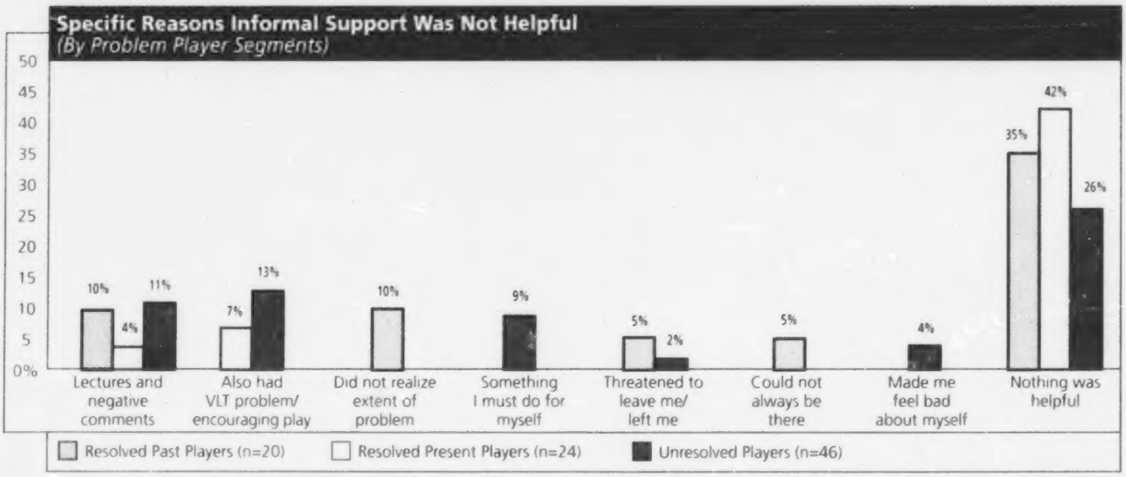
in between counseling or treatment sessions. Without this environmental support, it appears that positive outcomes are unlikely to be achieved.

Again, the cooperation of family and friends should be enlisted and these individuals need to be provided with the necessary information and support to be an effective partner in the resolution process.

REASONS INFORMAL SOURCES WERE NOT CONSIDERED HELPFUL



The Resolved Present Players were least likely to indicate that assistance provided by informal support sources was not helpful. This is likely due, in part, to the fact that the Resolved Present Players have not accrued as much financial and relationship damage as the other players prior to getting their VL gambling back under control. As a result, the gambling may have been a less contentious issue for the spouse and family. It may also be that the act of sharing their resolve to reduce and manage their VL play with their families assisted them in maintaining and strengthening their commitment to change. The Unresolved Players (35%) and, to a slightly lesser extent, Resolved Past Players (30%) were most inclined to note specific examples of responses and behaviours by others that were not helpful in dealing with their VL gambling problem.



Negative comments, lectures and negative reinforcement from friends and family were perceived to be very unhelpful and counter-productive by the players (≈10%). **Nagging** did little to offer the player advice or assistance and tended to further erode self-esteem. It also, in some cases, drove players to the machines and in others precipitated fights and arguments.

"Lectures and negative comments from my family and friends such as 'why did you do that?' or 'I can't believe you are addicted [to VLT's].' Those comments didn't make me feel good at all." (Female, 30 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"At one point, people were telling me not to do it and it just made me want to play even more." (Male, 44 years, Unresolved Player)

"Repeating it all the time would irritate me and then I would go play more." (Female, 54 years, Resolved Present Player)

"They nagged me everyday about it and that annoys me and I don't want to keep hearing I have a problem." (Male, 54 years, Unresolved Player)

"She just yelled at me a lot and instead of helping me, she made me angry." (Male, 53 years, Unresolved Player)

"She said, 'I don't believe you can stop'." (Male, 29 years, Resolved Past Player)

The continuing involvement of one's spouse, partner, family or close friends in VL play was considered to be a distinct drawback by approximately 13% of the Unresolved Players and 7% of Resolved Players. This was also noted as a potential problem if both partners were trying to quit playing together, as the outcome for one is dependent upon the other's success.

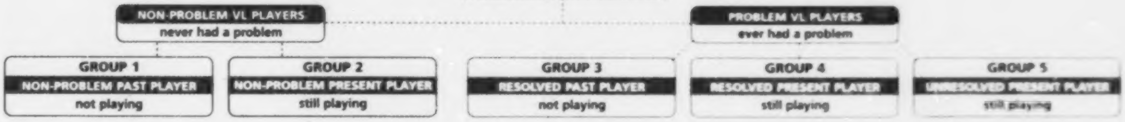
"My husband was still playing at the time and sometimes made me want to play more." (Female, 33 years, Resolved Present Player)

"Well, the other people who were still playing never helped. It only encourages VL play, it doesn't stop it." (Female, 60 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"Too much nagging from my brothers, 'When are we going to play again?' They had a problem too so they didn't know what they were talking about. No help. One brother had to mortgage his house." (Male, 52 years, Unresolved Player)

"They [other players] weren't helpful because they really didn't care how much I played or if I lost money." (Male, 41 years, Unresolved Player)

"It wasn't helpful, we both had problems. My husband - if [either of us] relapsed, we would both have gone down." (Female, 27 years, Resolved Present Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

A few Resolved Past Players (10%) noted that friends and family **did not fully appreciate the extent of the problem, nor appreciate the effort required to get it under control. Threats to leave** were also considered ineffective since the player was not purposely trying to hurt the other person.

"My husband always said I was wasting my time and then he said, 'Why are you pretending this is a problem?' when it was a real problem for me." (Female, 41 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The advice offered wasn't reasonable, they suggested I play in moderation. Ya right." (Female, 30 years, Resolved Past Player)

"My husband threatening to leave me wasn't helpful. Made me feel bad about myself." (Female, 26 years, Resolved Past Player)

Only Unresolved Players mentioned the fact that stopping play is something that they had to do on their own and, therefore, no assistance from others would be helpful.

"Everything they said wasn't helpful. I needed to want to reduce play on my own." (Male, 31 years, Unresolved Player)

"They all tried their best, but were not helpful. It was something I had to do for myself." (Male, 41 years, Partially Resolved Player)

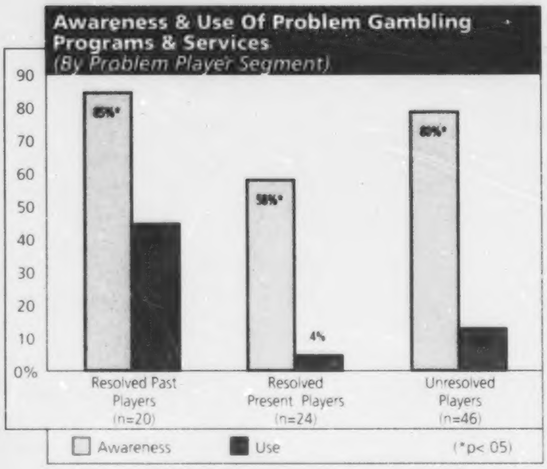
Approximately half of all those Problem Players who have ever accessed assistance from friends, family and others report that this informal support was helpful, with no negative aspects noted. This was especially true for the Resolved Present Players who have been able to manage and control their VL play. Only 12% noted support provided by friends and family that was unhelpful and this was largely attributed to the involvement of the support person in either regular or problem VL play. However, about one-third of the Unresolved and Resolved Past Players reported negative effects in response to efforts by friends and family.

Clearly, negative feedback, threats, lectures, nagging and denigrating comments uniformly had a negative impact on players and were seen to offer no help to the player in trying to change their behaviour. If anything, such tactics were counterproductive and were sometimes seen to drive the player back to VL gambling, both in terms of self-fulfilling prophecy (*"they are right, I can't stop so why bother to try"*) and in attempts to escape from diminished self-esteem problems, fighting and arguments at home (*"I just had to get away and I'd end up where I always do"*). The heavy involvement of friends and family, especially the spouse or partner, in VL gambling was also considered a mitigating factor for the player in trying to stop or reduce their play.

Again, the critical role of the informal support network in facilitating recovery from problem VL gambling suggests that friends and family are as in need of information, advice and support as the Problem VL Player, if they are to be of any assistance.

From a treatment perspective, assessment of the nature of the informal support available and provided to the Problem Player will be an important component in determining the situational factors impacting recovery and relapse. Addressing deficiencies in this area should enhance long-term outcomes.

USE OF FORMAL SERVICES/PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO HELP PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN NOVA SCOTIA

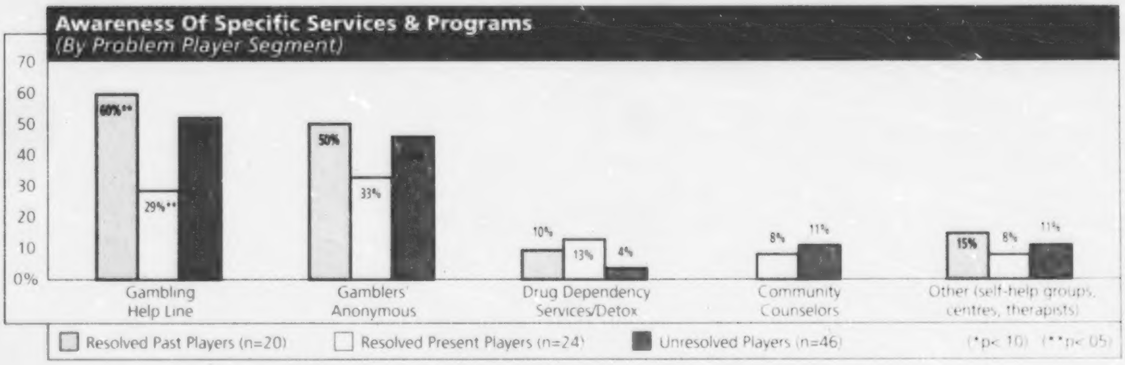


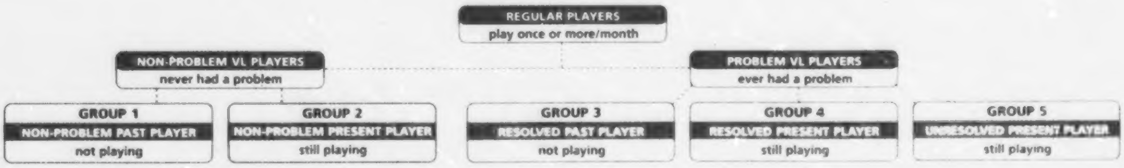
Over half of all past and present Problem VL Players are aware of at least one formal program or service available to help Problem Gamblers in Nova Scotia. In particular, those reporting the most negative effects associated with their VL play tend to also have significantly higher awareness levels for formal programs or services (80% to 85%). Therefore, **it appears that the majority of those adults most likely to need and/or benefit from formalized problem gambling services are aware of at least one program or service available in the province.**

Resolved Present Players are comprised of those least likely to seek out assistance beyond the support of their immediate families, and, not surprisingly, are least likely to have heard of any formal programs or services for problem gamblers. Moreover, awareness has little to no impact on usage for these players, as approximately 94% of Resolved Present Players who know of specific services did not undertake contact or use of such a service.

Resolved Past Players, who have all currently stopped playing VLT's, are at least three times as likely as Unresolved Players to have sought out assistance from any formal problem gambling services or programs (45% versus 13%; p<.05). **Thus, it appears that almost half of the Resolved Past Players accessed professional, or more formalized assistance in resolving their video lottery problem.**

In contrast, only 13% of the Unresolved Players, comprised of those still engaged in problem VL gambling, have sought out formalized help with obviously more limited success.




REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

A few Resolved Past Players (10%) noted that friends and family **did not fully appreciate the extent of the problem, nor appreciate the effort required to get it under control. Threats to leave** were also considered ineffective since the player was not purposely trying to hurt the other person.

"My husband always said I was wasting my time and then he said, 'Why are you pretending this is a problem?' when it was a real problem for me." (Female, 41 years, Resolved Past Player)

"The advice offered wasn't reasonable, they suggested I play in moderation. Ya right." (Female, 30 years, Resolved Past Player)

"My husband threatening to leave me wasn't helpful. Made me feel bad about myself." (Female, 26 years, Resolved Past Player)

Only Unresolved Players mentioned the fact that stopping play is something that they had to do on their own and, therefore, no assistance from others would be helpful.

"Everything they said wasn't helpful. I needed to want to reduce play on my own." (Male, 31 years, Unresolved Player)

"They all tried their best, but were not helpful. It was something I had to do for myself." (Male, 41 years, Partially Resolved Player)

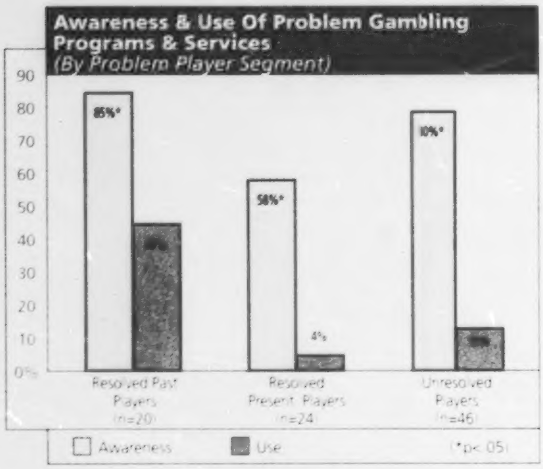
Approximately half of all those Problem Players who have ever accessed assistance from friends, family and others report that this informal support was helpful, with no negative aspects noted. This was especially true for the Resolved Present Players who have been able to manage and control their VL play. Only 12% noted support provided by friends and family that was unhelpful and this was largely attributed to the involvement of the support person in either regular or problem VL play. However, about one-third of the Unresolved and Resolved Past Players reported negative effects in response to efforts by friends and family.

Clearly, negative feedback, threats, lectures, nagging and denigrating comments uniformly had a negative impact on players and were seen to offer no help to the player in trying to change their behaviour. If anything, such tactics were counterproductive and were sometimes seen to drive the player back to VL gambling, both in terms of self-fulfilling prophecy (*"they are right, I can't stop so why bother to try"*) and in attempts to escape from diminished self-esteem problems, fighting and arguments at home (*"I just had to get away and I'd end up where I always do"*). The heavy involvement of friends and family, especially the spouse or partner, in VL gambling was also considered a mitigating factor for the player in trying to stop or reduce their play.

Again, the critical role of the informal support network in facilitating recovery from problem VL gambling suggests that friends and family are as in need of information, advice and support as the Problem VL Player, if they are to be of any assistance.

From a treatment perspective, assessment of the nature of the informal support available and provided to the Problem Player will be an important component in determining the situational factors impacting recovery and relapse. Addressing deficiencies in this area should enhance long-term outcomes.

USE OF FORMAL SERVICES/PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO HELP PROBLEM GAMBLERS IN NOVA SCOTIA

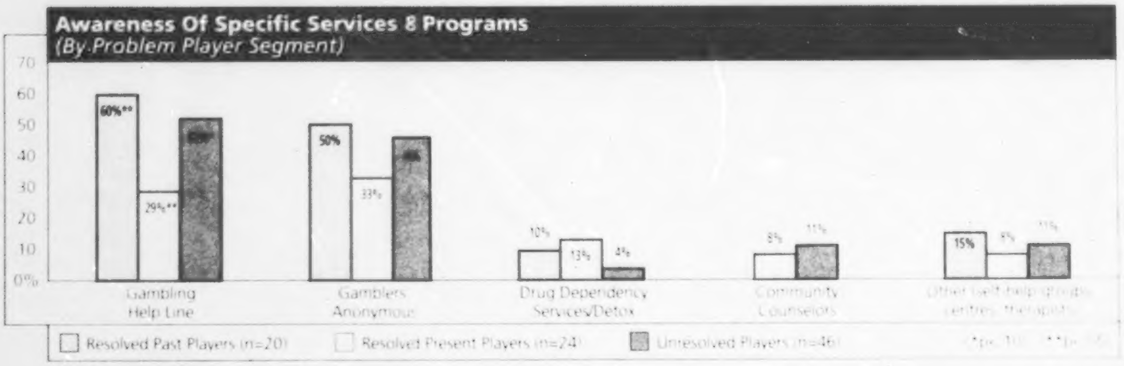

Awareness & Use Of Problem Gambling Programs & Services
(By Problem Player Segment)

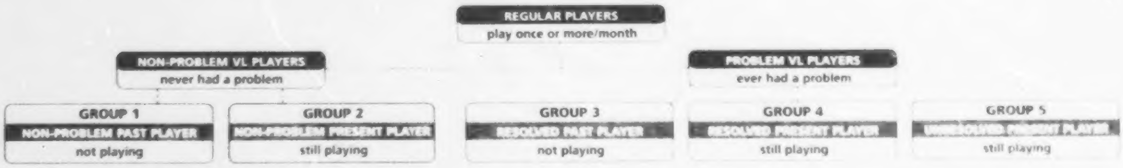
Over half of all past and present Problem VL Players are aware of at least one formal program or service available to help Problem Gamblers in Nova Scotia. In particular, those reporting the most negative effects associated with their VL play tend to also have significantly higher awareness levels for formal programs or services (80% to 85%). Therefore, **it appears that the majority of those adults most likely to need and/or benefit from formalized problem gambling services are aware of at least one program or service available in the province.**

Resolved Present Players are comprised of those least likely to seek out assistance beyond the support of their immediate families, and, not surprisingly, are least likely to have heard of any formal programs or services for problem gamblers. Moreover, awareness has little to no impact on usage for these players, as approximately 94% of Resolved Present Players who know of specific services did not undertake contact or use of such a service.

Resolved Past Players, who have all currently stopped playing VLT's, are at least three times as likely as Unresolved Players to have sought out assistance from any formal problem gambling services or programs (45% versus 13%; p<.05). **Thus, it appears that almost half of the Resolved Past Players accessed professional, or more formalized assistance in resolving their video lottery problem.**

In contrast, only 13% of the Unresolved Players, comprised of those still engaged in problem VL gambling, have sought out formalized help with obviously more limited success.


Awareness Of Specific Services & Programs
(By Problem Player Segment)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

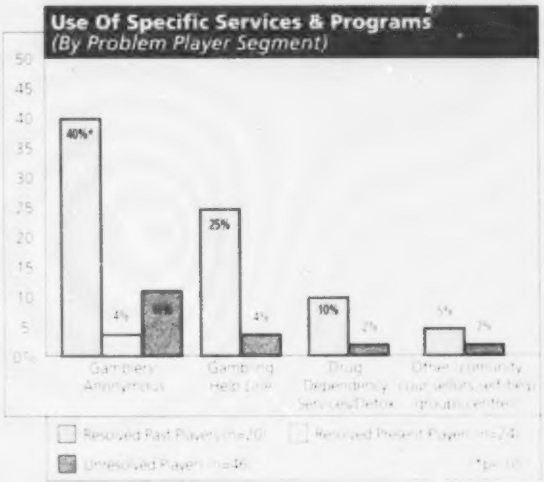
The **Problem Gambling Help Line and Gamblers' Anonymous (GA)** elicit the highest awareness levels. **Drug Dependency/Addiction Services** is only noted by 4% to 13% of Past and Present Problem Players. In fact, those who have not yet resolved their VL problem are more inclined to mention **community counselors** than to be aware of problem gambling services through the Department of Health's Drug Dependency/ Addiction Services (4% versus 11%). However, due to the ambiguity of the label, "community counselors" may very well include community health workers and others associated with the Department of Health's Drug Dependency/Addiction Services.

The findings suggest that beyond the Help Line and GA, Problem VL Gamblers have fairly low awareness of specific programs to assist Problem Gamblers. **Thus, those who are rejecting or dismissing the use of formalized assistance may be doing so in response to the only specific services they are aware of; the Gambling Help Line and GA. If the players are unaware that other counseling and support services are available, they will not seek out such alternatives.**

GAMBLERS' ANONYMOUS

Almost all (89%) of the Resolved Past Players who have accessed any formal problem gambling services contacted Gamblers' Anonymous (GA). A full 40% of Resolved Past Players, all of whom have stopped playing at this time, report that they had sought out assistance from GA versus only 4% of the Resolved Present Players and 11% of Unresolved Players.

In terms of helpfulness, 35% of the Resolved Past Players rated GA a 4 (20%) or 5 (15%) on a 5-point scale, where 1 means not at all helpful and 5 means very helpful. Only one Resolved Past Player was ambivalent towards GA and attributed the group a helpfulness rating of 3.


Use Of Specific Services & Programs
(By Problem Player Segment)

"They were encouraging. I didn't like the group setting, but they were helpful in my thinking and knowing I could stop. I didn't like talking to a group [though]."
(Female, 41 years, Resolved Past Player)

"They were helpful and encouraged me. They gave me lots of information to read." (Female, 60 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"Because it helps you realize you are not the only one with this problem. These people understand your problem. The biggest part was the Serenity Prayer. I changed the things I could and accepted what I could not change."
(Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

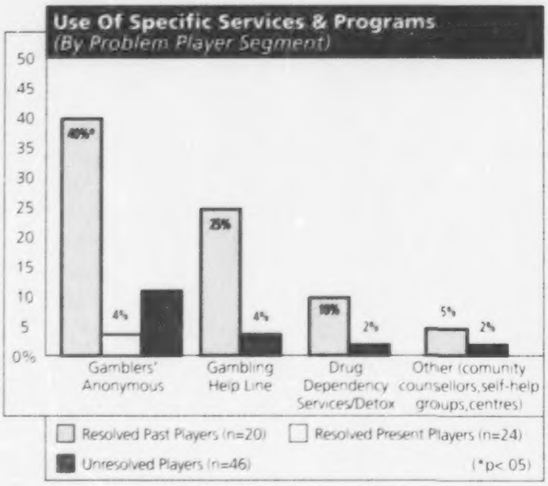
The **Problem Gambling Help Line and Gamblers' Anonymous (GA)** elicit the highest awareness levels. **Drug Dependency/Addiction Services** is only noted by 4% to 13% of Past and Present Problem Players. In fact, those who have not yet resolved their VL problem are more inclined to mention **community counselors** than to be aware of problem gambling services through the Department of Health's Drug Dependency/ Addiction Services (4% versus 11%). However, due to the ambiguity of the label, "community counselors" may very well include community health workers and others associated with the Department of Health's Drug Dependency/Addiction Services.

The findings suggest that beyond the Help Line and GA, Problem VL Gamblers have fairly low awareness of specific programs to assist Problem Gamblers. **Thus, those who are rejecting or dismissing the use of formalized assistance may be doing so in response to the only specific services they are aware of; the Gambling Help Line and GA. If the players are unaware that other counseling and support services are available, they will not seek out such alternatives.**

GAMBLERS' ANONYMOUS

Almost all (89%) of the Resolved Past Players who have accessed any formal problem gambling services contacted Gamblers' Anonymous (GA). A full 40% of Resolved Past Players, all of whom have stopped playing at this time, report that they had sought out assistance from GA versus only 4% of the Resolved Present Players and 11% of Unresolved Players.

In terms of helpfulness, 35% of the Resolved Past Players rated GA a 4 (20%) or 5 (15%) on a 5-point scale, where 1 means not at all helpful and 5 means very helpful. Only one Resolved Past Player was ambivalent towards GA and attributed the group a helpfulness rating of 3.


Use Of Specific Services & Programs
(By Problem Player Segment)

"They were encouraging. I didn't like the group setting, but they were helpful in my thinking and knowing I could stop. I didn't like talking to a group [though]."
(Female, 41 years, Resolved Past Player)

"They were helpful and encouraged me. They gave me lots of information to read." (Female, 60 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"Because it helps you realize you are not the only one with this problem. These people understand your problem. The biggest part was the Serenity Prayer. I changed the things I could and accepted what I could not change."
(Female, 44 years, Resolved Past Player)

"You have to speak out loud in front of everybody and it makes you realize how bad it is." (Male, 29 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I find without their help, I wouldn't survive this. Everyone is supportive and listened without judging and it was nice to know of other people who had been through it and survived." (Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)

"They helped me feel better about myself, helped me realize I had a problem and told me I wasn't alone." (Female, 26 years, Resolved Past Player)

"They made me admit I had a problem, had me face my problems and own up to being a gambling addict. They made me talk about my gambling and eventually made me feel better about myself and my life." (Male, 40 years, Resolved Past Player)

It appears that the Resolved Past Players valued the moral support and non-judgmental encouragement provided by the group. Admitting and disclosing their problem in this supportive environment was also viewed positively as a way of acknowledging the extent of their gambling problem and reaffirming their commitment to change.

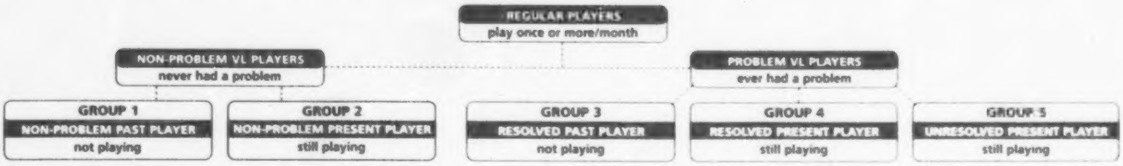
While GA is reported to be extremely helpful by the Resolved Past Players, response was less favorable from the Resolved Present Players and Unresolved Players accessing the service. Reservations about the style and group approach were expressed. In some cases, it was felt that "just talking" was not effective for the individual and that their problem was not serious enough to warrant this service. The primary complaint centered on the lack of comfort individuals felt in attending and participating.

"I felt really depressed when I left the meeting. Also they were all smokers and I didn't smoke so it made it hard to sit with them." (Male, 36 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I felt like it was a joke. I felt uncomfortable and didn't fit in."
(Female, 34 years, Resolved Present Player)

"It wasn't convenient. I have to drive an hour away and it is too far away. Everybody knew each other already. I felt uncomfortable." (Female, 44 years, Unresolved Player)

"Because I already knew I had a problem. Didn't offer much else. I read up on the information GA sent me, but I still had to help myself."
(Female, 44 years, Unresolved Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

"I don't know, it's a lot of talking and it's just talking, so it wasn't that great for me." (Female, 59 years, Unresolved Player)

"I felt bad about calling them in the first place. It was hard for me because I have to help myself. It's my problem and no one can help me, I have to help myself." (Male, 44 years, Unresolved Player)

PROBLEM GAMBLING HELP LINE

Although awareness levels are similar for both the Help Line and GA, for the most part, **Problem Players are only about half as likely to have contacted the Gambling Help Line than to have accessed Gamblers' Anonymous.** There is a fair amount of overlap in use of the two services, with 86% of those who have called the Help Line also having been in contact with GA.

While respondents tended to be less enthusiastic in evaluating the help provided by the Gambling Help Line, no one stated that the service was ineffective. In total, 25% of Resolved Past Players (n=6) and 4% of Unresolved Players (n=2) report having contacted the Help Line, with most (n=6) attributing an average rating of 3 out of 5. This rating appears to be largely in response to the limitations inherent in assistance provided over the telephone, and the fact that the Problem Gambling Help Line is sometimes viewed as a referral service by the players.

"They gave me the contacts that I need to get in touch with GA and where I could find a meeting." (Male, 40 years, Resolved Past Player)

"They were helpful, but couldn't really help me how I needed it. They couldn't support me like my family could." (Male, 36 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Again, I have to help myself, it's a trapped feeling, but no one can help until I help myself, no one else can." (Female, 44 years, Unresolved Player)

"They are somewhat effective, it's hard for me to say. I only called them once, but they gave me names and numbers to call." (Male, 43 years, Resolved Past Player)

"They only referred me to someone else so not very helpful at all." (Male, 29 years, Resolved Past Player)

There were also a couple of references to the impersonal nature of the contact. While these may be isolated incidences, **the evidence thus far suggests that Problem VL Gamblers are very reluctant and hesitant in seeking help. When they do finally call, they will often experience embarrassment, shame and varying degrees of family and financial stress. Empathy, sensitivity and understanding are essential requirements if a Problem VL Gambler is going to pursue "help" any further.**

"They didn't seem to have any help. There wasn't enough information and I found they were lacking when it came to helping me. It was very cold and I didn't find it a personal thing. It was just someone answering a phone and giving me another number to call." (Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)

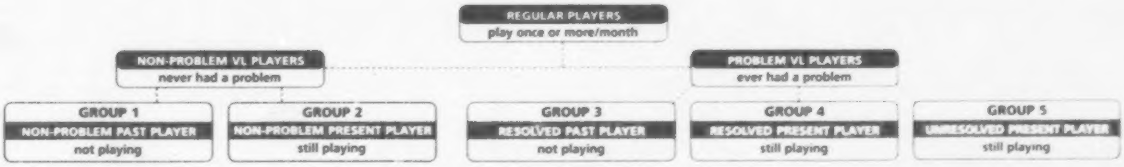
DRUG DEPENDENCY/ADDICTION SERVICES

The reported use of Drug Dependency services was low, with only 3% (n=3) of all Problem Players having accessed the services. There were two of the Resolved Past Players and only one Unresolved Problem Player indicating that they had used the service. In two of the cases, the individual also had used and rated GA favorably. For the other individual, both GA and Drug Dependency were rated less helpful. While this evidence is anecdotal and exploratory, it appears that there may be overlap in the type of services being offered to Problem Players.

"The counselor told me I could help myself. She was understanding and she listened and passed no judgement, that meant a lot. I found the one-on-one more effective [than GA] because she was only listening and talking to me. GA was also helpful and encouraged me." (Female, 60 years, Unresolved Player)

"Friendliness, open arms to help, talking with other people who had gone through it and people listening to your cry for help."
(Female, 59 years, Resolved Past Player)

"My wife was the most helpful. I only went to the Department of Health to appease her, but it was her support that did the most."
(Male, 43 years, Resolved Past Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

In general, awareness of any problem gambling services and programs by all Problem VL Players participating in the study is fairly high with three-quarters able to cite at least one formal program available in Nova Scotia.

The Problem Gambling Help Line (48%) and Gamblers' Anonymous (43%) are driving the majority of this awareness. In fact, 88% of those able to cite any problem gambling services note one or both of these sources of assistance. Only 8% respectively mentioned awareness for Drug Dependency/ Addiction Services, community counselors and/or any other sources.

Overall, 16% of all Problem VL Players accessed any of these sources for assistance. Resolved Past Players are more inclined than either of the other two Problem Player groups to have sought help from formalized service providers and to have found these services helpful.

Gamblers' Anonymous is the most widely accessed service. Overall, 88% of those who used any formalized problem gambling support specifically accessed this program, as compared to 44% having contacted the Problem Gambling Help Line. Not surprisingly, there is considerable overlap in usage among the more formal problem gambling services. In fact, 56% of Problem Players who sought out formal services or programs went to more than one source for assistance. Thus, once a Problem VL Gambler undertakes to get assistance, they are more inclined to access a wider range of the available services, most likely in response to referrals by the treatment or service providers. For the remaining 44% who used only one resource, Gamblers' Anonymous was the sole service provider mentioned in all cases.

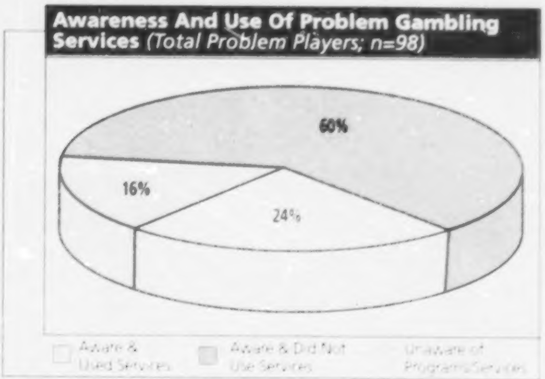
Resolved Past Players, who have stopped playing VLT's altogether, tend to have derived the greatest benefit from existing problem gambling services in Nova Scotia. The group setting of GA was viewed as supportive and encouraging. Recognition, acknowledgement and disclosure of their problem was seen to have therapeutic value by allowing individuals to come to terms with their VL gambling in a safe and non-judgmental environment. Similar to comments for Drug Dependency Services, the opportunity to talk with and listen to others who have shared similar experiences was viewed as particularly helpful and supportive.

However, the same type of forum and treatment approach was perceived to be more threatening and uncomfortable by other Problem VL Gamblers. In particular, the Unresolved Players who have sought out assistance were more inclined to find the GA type of program less relevant to them personally and, thus, of little or no help in dealing with their gambling problem. This is an important finding, given that awareness of other alternatives is extremely low. Thus, it appears that a single approach for all problem gambling will only result in assisting a distinct yet limited group of Problem VL Players. The tendency for these Problem Players to be the primary group that seeks assistance from formal service providers will cause the services to reflect the needs of this particular type of "client." Services such as the Help Line, as well as family physicians, will need to assess the individual's personal predisposition before offering referrals for assistance. This will be extremely important at the outset of the contact to ensure presented options are relevant to the particular Problem Player, and to ensure they will be encouraged to continue to seek further assistance in resolving their problem.

Given the dependence of most Problem Players on the support of friends and family in resolving their problem, a more integrated approach may be required whereby the informal support network is targeted for assistance by the formal service providers. Enhancing the skill set, understanding and available tools that the friends and family can use in helping support the Problem Gambler in their commitment to change will be an essential service. This will also offer assistance to the majority of those who are actively seeking out information and help primarily in response to the involvement of a loved one in Problem VL Gambling.

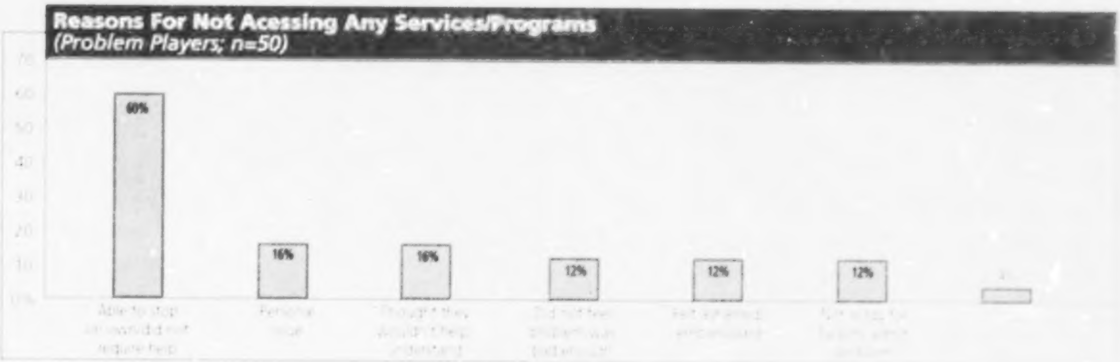
For those without an informal support network, or those who respond positively to sharing their experience with others, GA and other forms of group counseling, peer counseling, internet chat rooms, and other self-help initiatives continue to offer a valuable and necessary service.

REASONS FOR NOT ACCESSING ANY FORMAL SERVICES/PROGRAMS FOR HELP

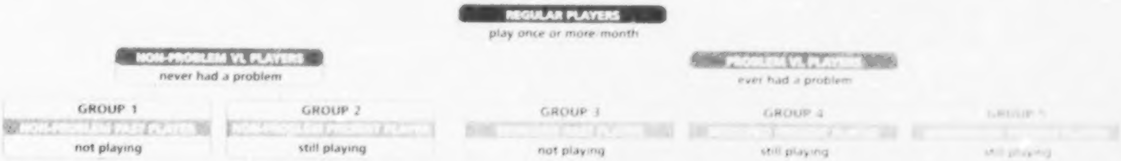


Overall, 16% of all past and present Problem Players taking part in the study indicated they had accessed any formalized services to assist them with their problem VL gambling. An additional 24% reported they were unaware of any such services available to help Problem Gamblers in Nova Scotia. This means that 60% of all those who are, or were, involved in problem VL play were aware of the existence of problem gambling services, but did not access such services or programs to assist them in dealing with their VL gambling problem.

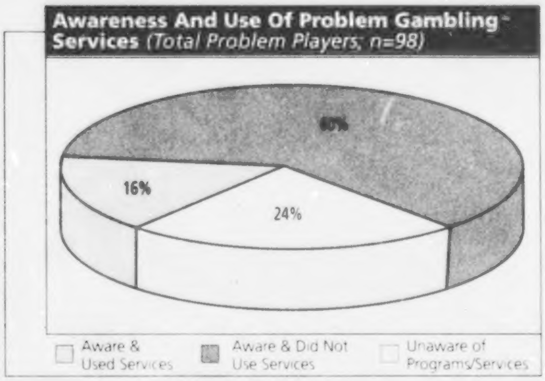
To gain insight as to the barriers impacting the use of problem gambling services and programs in Nova Scotia, all respondents electing not to use any forms of formal assistance were queried as to the reasons underlying their decision. In total, 51% of past and present Problem Players responded to the question (n=50).



The primary barrier, cited by 60% of all Problem Players who did not access any formal services, is attributed to their ability or belief that they can resolve their VL gambling problem on their own. Given that almost half of those holding this opinion indicate they have resolved their problems, there appears to be some validity in this assumption. Overall, this translates into approximately one quarter of all Resolved Players (past and present) who specifically note that they did not contact formal sources due to their own internal ability to stop or manage their VL play.

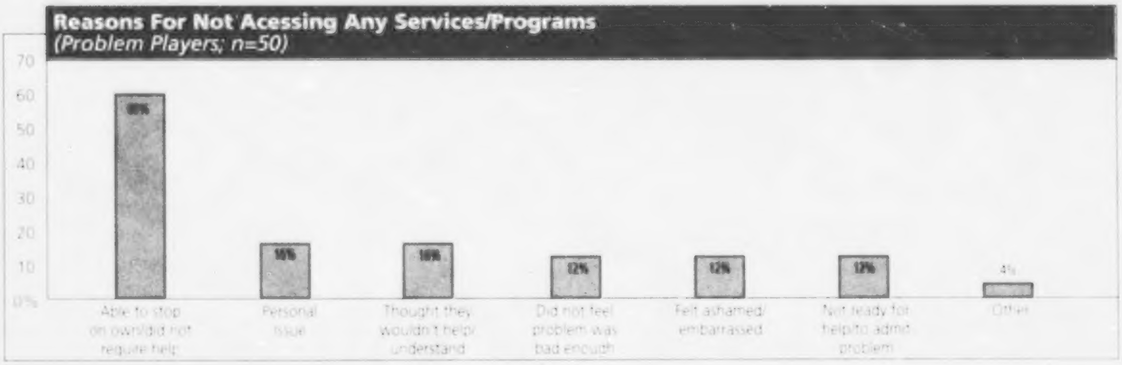

REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYERS
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYERS
still playing
GROUP 3
not playing
GROUP 4
still playing
still playing

REASONS FOR NOT ACCESSING ANY FORMAL SERVICES/PROGRAMS FOR HELP

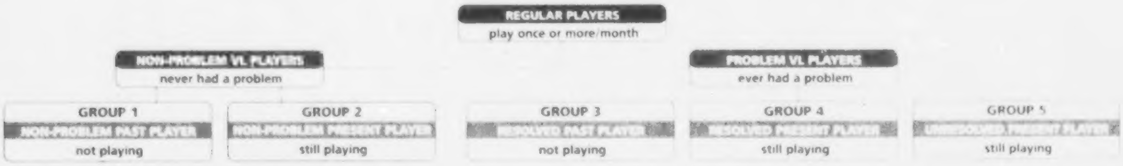

Awareness And Use Of Problem Gambling Services *(Total Problem Players; n=98)*

Overall, 16% of all past and present Problem Players taking part in the study indicated they had accessed any formalized services to assist them with their problem VL gambling. An additional 24% reported they were unaware of any such services available to help Problem Gamblers in Nova Scotia. This means that 60% of all those who are, or were, involved in problem VL play were aware of the existence of problem gambling services, but did not access such services or programs to assist them in dealing with their VL gambling problem.

To gain insight as to the barriers impacting the use of problem gambling services and programs in Nova Scotia, all respondents electing not to use any forms of formal assistance were queried as to the reasons underlying their decision. In total, 51% of past and present Problem Players responded to the question (n=50).


Reasons For Not Acessing Any Services/Programs *(Problem Players; n=50)*

The primary barrier, cited by 60% of all Problem Players who did not access any formal services, is attributed to their ability or belief that they can resolve their VL gambling problem on their own. Given that almost half of those holding this opinion indicate they have resolved their problems, there appears to be some validity in this assumption. Overall, this translates into approximately one-quarter of all Resolved Players (past and present) who specifically note that they did not contact formal sources due to their own internal ability to stop or manage their VL play.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

"I didn't need to, I just managed to do it on my own."
(Male, 38 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I just didn't. I guess it was something I wanted to do on my own."
(Male, 27 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I can do it myself. I don't need a service like that."
(Male, 40 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I did it on my own and didn't feel I needed to go to any of those places."
(Male, 52 years, Resolved Present Player)

"Didn't have a problem I couldn't solve myself."
(Male, 57 years, Partially Resolved Present Player)

"I have to help myself and no one can do that for me. That's how I feel anyway."
(Male, 67 years, Partially Resolved Player)

Unresolved Players are just as likely as the Resolved Present Players to believe they can address the problem by themselves. Part of this conviction stems from **the need for them to personally re-establish control rather than admit they are incapable of managing their behaviour.** This appears to be an important driver for those who experience VL gambling problems.

"My pride gets in the way. That and I would like to think that I can do it on my own, quit playing." (Female, 61 years, Unresolved Player)

"Because I don't feel I need to go, I can do it on my own."
(Female, 46 years, Unresolved Player)

Other reasons cited by Problem Players for not seeking out formalized sources of assistance centre on concerns that their **problem is/was not serious enough to justify outside intervention** (12%). For some Problem Players, this position seems warranted. For others, it is preventing them from seeking out assistance prior to the problem escalating to more serious levels. **Embarrassment and shame** are also accompanying factors that discourage an individual from pursuing professional help. The need for help is considered a weakness, with players often determined to resolve the problem by themselves. The problem itself is viewed as a **personal, private matter that players are reluctant to share,** with concerns expressed surrounding confidentiality (16%). For these individuals, group settings or disclosures may be particularly intimidating or uncomfortable and, thus, they are not likely to access such services or programs.

"I thought I didn't have a problem. I have slowed down myself so I think I can handle it myself. I think I might be embarrassed to go to one of those places." (Male, 58 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I guess because I never thought it had gone that far. I knew I had a problem and I wanted to fix it on my own." (Female, 30 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I never thought I was bad enough to go and I feel I can do it on my own and I have so far." (Female, 52 years, Partially Resolved Player)

"I'm mortified, I'm embarrassed of who I might meet there. Also had a feeling in my heart that if I really wanted to stop I can do it myself." (Female, 61 years, Unresolved Player)

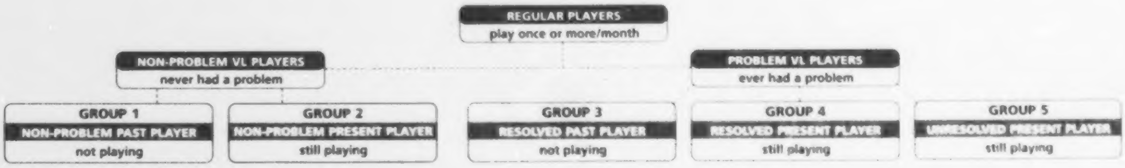
"I was ashamed and didn't want to admit to others I have a problem. It's personal." (Female, 27 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I never thought I was far enough in trouble to call." (Male, 35 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Embarrassment, I haven't gotten to the point yet where I absolutely can't stop." (Female, 49 years, Unresolved Player)

"Did not need the help. I was not addicted to the machines. I had to do it myself, on my own." (Male, 35 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I think the final decision should be up to yourself. I had a friend helping. I don't like telling my problems to strangers." (Male, 38 years, Resolved Past Player)


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

There are also perceptions that **such services and programs will not provide any help** to the individual (16%). For these individuals, both **lack of information** and a feeling the programs or services **aren't relevant** for them are contributing to their reluctance to contact formal problem gambling services.

"Because I don't think they would work for me for some reason." (Male, 50 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I guess I never thought it would help me." (Male, 58 years, Unresolved Player)

"I didn't bother. I really didn't want to and I didn't think it would help me any." (Male, 22 years, Unresolved Player)

"I didn't think they would be able to help. I didn't feel strangers could do anything my friends couldn't do." (Male, 33 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Well, I really didn't believe there was much help in that I never knew anyone who called the [Help Line] number. I heard the government was supposed to start up programs to help problem players, but never heard if they did or not." (Male, 47 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I don't want to go. I don't want to get help. They can't help me, it would just end up in an argument and I don't need that now. I don't want to get help and I don't want anyone calling me to offer help." (Male, 47 years, Unresolved Player)

"I guess I just never thought it would help me." (Male, 58 years, Unresolved Player)

The vast majority of those who develop problems with their VL gambling in Nova Scotia do not go to formal service providers for help. While approximately one-quarter are not aware of any specific services or programs, the remainder (≈60%) do not elect to use the available resources. It should be kept in mind that 87% of those past and present Problem VL Players who have not sought formal assistance are exclusively aware of only Gamblers' Anonymous (43%) and/or the Gambling Help Line (60%) as available options. Therefore, the majority of the reasons given for not accessing problem gambling programs or services will be in reference to these two specific services.

There is a significant proportion of Problem Players who opt to solve their problems on their own or with the help of friends and family. The fact that almost half (43%) of these individuals have successfully resolved their VL gambling problems suggests such assumptions have some validity. However, for the Unresolved Players the struggle is on-going. Regardless, there is a common theme that the players themselves need to be empowered and in control of the resolution process, which in many cases is viewed as a private and personal endeavour.

There is a fair amount of skepticism on the part of some Problem VL Players regarding the

There are also perceptions that **such services and programs will not provide any help** to the individual (16%). For these individuals, both **lack of information** and a feeling the programs or services **aren't relevant** for them are contributing to their reluctance to contact formal problem gambling services.

"Because I don't think they would work for me for some reason." (Male, 50 years, Resolved Present Player)

"I guess I never thought it would help me." (Male, 58 years, Unresolved Player)

"I didn't bother. I really didn't want to and I didn't think it would help me any." (Male, 22 years, Unresolved Player)

"I didn't think they would be able to help. I didn't feel strangers could do anything my friends couldn't do." (Male, 33 years, Resolved Past Player)

"Well, I really didn't believe there was much help in that I never knew anyone who called the [Help Line] number. I heard the government was supposed to start up programs to help problem players, but never heard if they did or not." (Male, 47 years, Resolved Past Player)

"I don't want to go. I don't want to get help. They can't help me, it would just end up in an argument and I don't need that now. I don't want to get help and I don't want anyone calling me to offer help." (Male, 47 years, Unresolved Player)

"I guess I just never thought it would help me." (Male, 58 years, Unresolved Player)

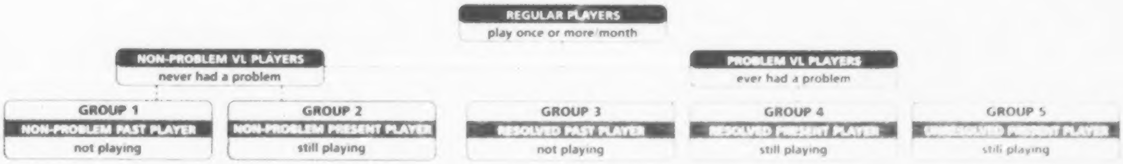
The vast majority of those who develop problems with their VL gambling in Nova Scotia do not go to formal service providers for help. While approximately one-quarter are not aware of any specific services or programs, the remainder (≈60%) do not elect to use the available resources. It should be kept in mind that 87% of those past and present Problem VL Players who have not sought formal assistance are exclusively aware of only Gamblers' Anonymous (43%) and/or the Gambling Help Line (60%) as available options. Therefore, the majority of the reasons given for not accessing problem gambling programs or services will be in reference to these two specific services.

There is a significant proportion of Problem Players who opt to solve their problems on their own or with the help of friends and family. The fact that almost half (43%) of these individuals have successfully resolved their VL gambling problems suggests such assumptions have some validity. However, for the Unresolved Players the struggle is on-going. Regardless, there is a common theme that the players themselves need to be empowered and in control of the resolution process, which in many cases is viewed as a private and personal endeavour.

There is a fair amount of skepticism on the part of some Problem VL Players regarding the

ability of existing problem gambling programs and services to be of any help to them personally. Players also report reluctance to seek out assistance due to embarrassment, shame, and concerns that their problem is not serious enough to warrant intervention. Perceptions are expressed that professional treatment or formal support services will not be sought out until the player has "hit rock bottom," exhausting all financial and emotional resources. Given these attitudes, there will be limited opportunity for service providers to assist players in harm minimization and preventative efforts unless the service providers adopt a proactive stance. At the present time, many Problem Players are invisible to treatment providers because they do not seek out professional assistance. It may be that such players are unaware of the full array of programs and services available or that they do not perceive the programs as matching their specific needs.

It may be advisable to examine methods of enhancing communications and the delivery of problem gambling information and services to a broader range of individuals experiencing difficulty with their play. Additional insight will be required to identify the key factors facilitating and supporting natural recovery by Problem VL Gamblers.


REGULAR PLAYERS
play once or more/month
NON-PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
never had a problem
PROBLEM VL PLAYERS
ever had a problem
GROUP 1
NON-PROBLEM PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 2
NON-PROBLEM PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 3
RESOLVED PAST PLAYER
not playing
GROUP 4
RESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing
GROUP 5
UNRESOLVED PRESENT PLAYER
still playing

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brown, R.I.F. (1986). "Dropouts and Continuers in Gamblers' Anonymous." Journal of Gambling Behaviour, Parts 1 - 4.

Dickerson, M. and Baron, E. (1999). "Future Research Into Problem Gambling", In press, Addiction.

Hodgins, D.C. & el Gueboly, N. (1998). Recovery from Gambling Problems: A Comparison of Resolved and Active Gamblers. Calgary, Alberta: University of Calgary & Foothills Medical Centre.

Lilienfeld, D.E. & Stolley, P.D. (1994). Foundations of Epidemiology. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nova Scotia Alcohol & Gaming Authority (1995). Annual Gaming Report. Dartmouth, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia Alcohol & Gaming Authority.

Nova Scotia Alcohol & Gaming Authority (1996). Annual Gaming Report. Dartmouth, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia Alcohol & Gaming Authority.

Nova Scotia Alcohol & Gaming Authority (1997). Annual Gaming Report. Dartmouth, Nova Scotia:Nova Scotia Alcohol & Gaming Authority.

Nova Scotia Alcohol & Gaming Authority (1998). Annual Gaming Report. Dartmouth, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia Alcohol & Gaming Authority.

Nova Scotia Alcohol & Gaming Authority (1999). Annual Gaming Report. Dartmouth, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia Alcohol & Gaming Authority.

Nova Scotia Department of Health and CHC Atlantic. (1997). Gambling Help Line Annual Statistical Report 1997. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia Department of Health.

Nova Scotia Department of Health and Focal Research Consultants Ltd. (1998). The 1997/98 Nova Scotia Regular VL Players' Survey. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia Department of Health.

Nova Scotia Gaming Control Commission (1996). A Year in Review: Gaming in Nova Scotia, The First Annual Report. Nova Scotia Gaming Commission 1995-96. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Gaming Control Commission.

Nova Scotia Liquor Commission (1989). Nova Scotia Liquor Commission 1998 - 1999. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Nova Scotia Liquor Commission.

Peele, S. (1998). "All Wet: The Gospel of Abstinence and Twelve-Step, Studies Show, is Leading American Alcoholics Astray." The Sciences, March/April, 17-21.

Prochaska, J.O., Norcross, J.C., & Diclemente, C.C. (1984). Changing For Good. New York: Avon Books Inc.

Rosecrance, J. (1986). "Adapting to Failure: The Case of Horse Race Gamblers." Journal of Gambling Behaviour, 2 (2), 81-94.

Schaffer, H.J., Hall, M.N., & Vander Bilt, J. (1997). Estimating the Prevalence of Disordered Gambling Behaviour in the United States and Canada: a Meta-Analysis. Boston: Harvard Medical School.

Wakefield, J.K. (1997). Diagnosing DSM-IV - Part 1: DSM-IV and the Concept of Addiction. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 35, 633-649.

Wildman, R.W. (1998). Gambling: An Attempt at an Integration. Edmonton, Alberta: Wynne Resources.